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WOULD I FIGHT?



# WOULD I FIGHT?

*Edited by*

KEITH BRIANT AND LYALL WILKES

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*‘WOULD CHRIST USE A BAYONET?’*

R. M. PRIDEAUX

Age 22—Educated at Plymouth College—Aspired to Priesthood—Entered Keble College, Oxford, in 1934—Read Philosophy, Politics and Economics—Ceased to be Anglo-Catholic—Ex-Chairman of O.U. The Next Five Years Group.

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Canon Sheppard was certain that the Christian could not resort to war under any circumstances whatever, while the Archbishop of York is convinced that this view 'is based upon a misunderstanding of the Gospels,' and asserts that the Christian should be prepared to fight for justice against injustice. In this debate on whether the injunction 'Thou shalt not kill' can be set aside or not all my sympathies are with Canon Sheppard: for I have not the least doubt about one thing—that Jesus Himself was a Pacifist, a hundred-per-cent. non-resister. It seems clear to me that Jesus was not a man of war, that He did not believe in the efficacy of violence to achieve His own purpose, and that such incidents as the rebuking of the disciple for drawing a sword to defend his master carry more weight than the overworked affair of driving the money-changers out of the temple. I have no patience with the ingenious people who try to build up, on odd texts and incidents, a picture of Jesus as a man who would ride out to battle in a good cause. The whole life of Jesus speaks of an unconquerable love for man—a love stronger than death, but His own death, not that of other people. The victories of Jesus were victories of the spirit, and when He refused to worship the Devil in order to gain the whole world, I take that to mean the rejection of the weapons of earthly rulers as unsuitable for the achievement of His Kingdom. History has endorsed the wisdom of that choice, for the Roman Empire, despite the efforts of Signor Mussolini, is a historian's memory, but the Sermon on the Mount is an active force in every country in the world—not yet a triumphant force, but a leaven working even in the minds of politicians, new wine bursting the old bottles of an old order of society.

But if I recognize all this, surely my position is quite straightforward—I am a Christian Pacifist? If Jesus was a non-resister, surely I must abjure the use of force also?



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I am almost on the point of saying ‘Yes, of course,’ when I remember my feelings of a year ago, at the time of the Italian aggression. Until then I was confident of my pacifism, because it meant to me that I would not fight to gain national or imperialist ends. But when Italy made her cowardly and scientifically barbarous attack on Abyssinia a new emotion was aroused in the hearts of many Pacifists, an emotion no less Christian than the determination to turn the other cheek, though perhaps more dangerous and easier to exploit. I wanted to protect Abyssinia, the weak, from Italy, the strong; I wanted my country to take the lead in enforcing a respect for the law of nations upon the aggressor—and that entailed the threat of force. I knew that the chief motive of the British Government might be the preservation of the Mediterranean as a high-road of the Empire, but I was willing to ignore that if Italy would be prevented from massacring a defenceless native people. Yet all this was not consistent with strict pacifism, and forced upon my notice the cogency of a view like the Archbishop of York’s, that International Peace must be based upon Justice, that Justice must be based upon International Law, and that the ultimate sanction of all Law is force. Here is what may be called the ‘realist’ point of view as opposed to the ‘Idealist’ point of view of the Peace Pledge Union. How is it possible for me to resolve these differences—or is it impossible?

So far the discussion has turned on means rather than ends. It has been assumed vaguely that we are all after the same thing—that we all want peace, for instance, and International Justice—but that we are not agreed on the means of reaching our goal. But are ‘we’ all after the same thing? If ‘we’ are not agreed on fundamentals it is not much use arguing about means. Means cannot be discussed in isolation from ends, and before I decide whether

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I should fight or not, I must ask 'For what?' Indeed, I have a *right* to ask for what possible cause I should be made a party to modern war. The onus of proof is on those who appeal to youth to rally to this banner or that. *Why* should I risk my life in order to take the lives of others? *Why* should I assist at this cannibal feast, in this frightful business of waging chemical and bacteriological war? If I am to do so the reasons given me must be overwhelmingly strong.

It is necessary also to ask in what wars I am likely in fact to be involved. For it seems important to remember I shall not be invited to choose what a war shall be about, but that war will probably be thrust upon me by the blundering of statesmen. Even if there is anything worth fighting for, it does not follow that that is what I shall find myself called upon to support.

There is no difficulty in finding causes—rather the contrary. There are an extraordinary number of banners under which I could go into battle, a delightful selection of uniforms from which to choose. The first and most obvious appeal is, of course, 'For King and Country,' with variations such as 'For King and Empire,' or, more popular of late, 'National Defence.' I should not lift a finger in the name of any of these, nor I think would many others of similar age. If I had been at Oxford at the time of the Oxford Union debate which received such publicity, I should certainly have voted with those who declared that they would not fight for King and Country. It is hard for me to understand the surprise and indignation which greeted this public repudiation of a slogan whose most vigorous adherents are Sir Oswald Mosley and Lord Rothermere. The passing of this motion was taken to indicate that Oxford was 'Red' and 'Revolutionary,' when all that it indicated was that to a large number of young people who had grown up since the

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War, a desire to further the interests of their own country did not seem to justify them in fighting a war. Does anyone really imagine that Britain or the British Empire has a monopoly of virtue in the world, that the white man has a divine mission to exploit native peoples? Does the British record in India and South Africa justify anyone in massacring the people of other nations in order to assert British superiority? I do not think so. ~

When the appeal is joined with that of ‘National Defence’ it is not so easy to reject. Surely I ought to be willing to defend the women and children from attack? But modern methods of ‘defence’ must give me pause, for the only method of defence is attack—and that means killing ‘enemy’ women and children quicker and more efficiently than the enemy can kill us. Can I possibly justify such action? If a man attacked a child I should probably knock him down, but there the issue is simple; the strong is attacking the weak, and it is my duty to protect the helpless, if necessary, by physical force. But there is no analogy with modern war where I cannot protect the weak without slaughtering the weak; I must kill innocent children on the other side in the cause of national defence. It is not good enough: ‘National Defence’ is too superficial a cry for work so dreadful: the paradox is too glaring and too painful.

It is unlikely, however, that any British Government will be so stupid as to embark on war upon a purely Nationalist or Imperial pretext, because it would be certain of meeting a formidable resistance. I am much more likely to be asked to fight for ‘Collective Security’ or ‘The League of Nations,’ and, as I have already hinted, this is to me a much more subtle appeal. ‘Collective Security’ and ‘The League of Nations’ stands for ideals of international order and justice—surely they are worth fighting for? In September, 1935, I was almost persuaded

that they were: but by 1936 it is obvious that Collective Security, like patriotism, may become the last refuge of the scoundrel. A British Government elected for the express purpose of supporting Collective Security found no difficulty in interpreting this to mean the Hoare-Laval agreement for the partition of Abyssinia into zones of economic interest and imperial control. A League of Nations which means a 'Gentlemen's' agreement between Great Powers does not command allegiance. Nor does a covenant tied to the Versailles Settlement, which dismembered the vanquished as seemed best to the victors. Much of that settlement is good, but much was bad and should be changed. I cannot fight for international order and justice unless they exist—at least in embryo. I cannot assume that Great Britain and France—much less Italy—because they are Great Powers existing within the framework of the League, are therefore the guardians of the law, and that when they appeal to me to fight, the cause must be a just one. Behind the façade of the League the old game of Power-Politics has gone on, and behind everything the economic war of tariffs and quotas, the struggle for markets, for positions of national privilege, wherever each country has felt that it had a 'special interest.' There does not seem to be any real international order to defend or preserve, and so I must look deeper before I can say that I would consider fighting for even the League of Nations.

Those who have felt doubt about the adequacy of the present League have sometimes expressed it by saying that only free and democratic states are capable of co-operating to build up a world order. If I follow this line of thought I reach the conclusion that I should welcome a league of democracies, and I am asked to defend free and peace-loving states against dictatorial and bellicose powers. This attracts me more than any of the preceding

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schemes, for there is a close connection between Christianity and ideals of self-government and freedom. Fascism is to me the denial of all the values I regard as most sacred, with its ‘sacred egoism,’ its glorification of war and its sentimental deification of the political boss. As I shall try to explain a little later, the antipathy between Fascism and Christianity seems to go very deep. This makes the antics of certain journals and journalists, who would convince us that Fascism has a mission to defend Christianity against Bolshevism, all the more surprising. But I am straying from the question of the moment, which is whether Democracy is the banner under which a Christian might conceivably fight. As with the League of Nations I cannot answer ‘Yes’ without looking deeper, for I am reminded of Low the cartoonist’s warning that if a war is fought it must not be merely for a redistribution of political hokum but for some more valuable change. The last war was fought ostensibly to preserve democracy, and it was won by the democracies—how comes it that we have to fight another for the same cause? It looks as though constitutional government is not in and by itself a synonym for all that is worth preserving. Nevertheless, I am convinced that ‘democracy’ is something of great value.

The ideals that have been considered so far have been political—Patriotism, Internationalism, Democracy. We have almost ignored the main battle-ground of the twentieth century, which has been in the domain of economics. It is this omission which has made our discussions so inconclusive. Behind the conflict of political ideals lies the ceaseless war of economic competition. The reason for my hesitation in acclaiming apparently fine ideals was due in part to a deep suspicion that if I was not careful I should find myself, under the guise of an ideal, fighting for the sectional interests of some economic group.

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And here, it seems to me, we touch on something fundamental to the whole problem of war. For the part played by the economic system is the key to the other aspects of the problem, and to its ultimate solution. I believe that while human selfishness and folly are causes of war; while out-of-date prejudices and loyalties play a large part; yet the most disastrous failure of mankind is its failure to take control of the economic and financial processes by which it is clothed, housed and fed. We are all members one of another in the international division of labour, yet economic nationalism is the curse of the age. It is possible to plan the world's work and wealth so that there is plenty for all, thanks to the development of science, yet the anarchy of private production for profit is allowed to continue instead of public production for use.

It is not possible in a short essay to do justice to the economic side of the world conflict, so I must content myself with saying that I feel the planning of the economic life of men to be the next great step forward, and that democracy, peace, freedom and even religion are meaningless unless they are expressed through the economic sphere. I believe that only Socialism can preserve the moral values of religion, the cultural values of civilization, and the material conditions of a full life. Moreover, in dealing with the economic problem of the world the essential harmony of interest common to all men must be revealed, and the main motive of conflict removed. International Socialism is therefore the cause to which it seems to me a Christian can, at the present time, give his most whole-hearted allegiance.

International Socialism being the ideal one would be willing to fight for, one must now ask whether that is likely to be made the issue. If a war occurs in which Socialists are found fighting on either side, clearly I cannot fight, for I should be fighting those with whom I

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had the greatest ideal in common for the sake of something less important. Such a contingency would simplify the Pacifist issue for me and leave me an out-and-out non-combatant. Unfortunately the split seems to be developing along Socialist versus Fascist lines, if the international war in Spain is any criterion of future struggles. There an attack has been made on a progressive reformist government by all the most reactionary elements in the army and the church—a church which in Spain seems to me to have forfeited any claim as an organization to interpret the mind of its Founder—with the connivance and support of Germany and Italy, the leading Fascist powers in Europe. Russia has come to the aid of the Government, and the issue is admitted by the Fascists to be a refusal to see Socialism in power in Spain. Under the guise of attacking Bolshevism an onslaught has been made on liberty, peace, democracy, and progress towards Socialism.

There seems little doubt that the practical question most likely to be put before me is: ‘Should I fight against Fascism?’ I see Fascism as the triumph of national hysteria over a sane patriotism, as government by neurotics and megalomaniacs, as the final fling of ignorance, superstition and cynical despair in high places as it meets the rising tide of a new faith in mankind, and a new hope for the future of the common people beloved by Jesus of Nazareth. And behind Fascism lurk the oligarchy of financiers and industrialists who, rather than co-operate in building up an order for the future in which their own position of privilege is lost, would face the prospect of war, and all that war involves.

But does not the fact that the lead against Fascism is coming from the U.S.S.R. frighten me? I am afraid not. Although the ruthlessness of Russia makes me uncomfortable, it is a ruthlessness to some extent forced on her

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rulers by circumstances. If I could convince myself that the use of force was right at all, I should consider its only justifiable use to be in the setting up of a world Socialist commonwealth. The logical corollary to the thirty-seventh of the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England which permits a man to take up arms in defence of the State is to-day revolutionary Christianity. For war means a breakdown of law and order, and if I fought it would be for the law and order of the future, not of the past: and the guardian of law and order for the future is International Socialism or Communism. I do not equate these political ideals with Christianity, because I think the religion of Jesus looks beyond any political ideal. But in a modern Armageddon it is clear to me which side approximates to the truth most nearly.

I have expressed my feelings about Fascism! But what of Communism? I can imagine many people asking 'Do you not fear Russia? Does that great country offer no attack on the Christian tradition in Europe?' This question undoubtedly presents great difficulties to anyone brought up in the traditional ways of thought of the Western Churches, and it is quite impossible to deal even briefly with the matter in a short essay such as this. In order not to leave it entirely unanswered, however, I shall make a number of statements which, though they appear arbitrary or unsupported, represent the conclusions of prolonged thought, argument, and investigation.

In the first place, as regards the ideal or goal of 'To each according to his need, from each according to his capacity,' as a principle for the ordering of the economic and material life of society, I cannot doubt that this is as much the goal of Christian as Communist effort. Jesus *was* a Communist. Secondly, though Russia is only at the Socialist stage, and is only just entering on her development as a free democracy, I believe that her leaders have



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genuine aspirations for true social progress. Thirdly, the executions and purges which have received such prominence in the news have been forced on the U.S.S.R., in so far as such stern measures are ever forced on a government, by outside intervention in complicity with internal disloyalty. I do not think they can be interpreted as the product of Stalin's jealous or petty determination to have no criticism. Fourthly, Stalin's pleas for toleration and understanding of individual difficulties in accepting Marxism (made at numerous party congresses) is only one piece of evidence that he is not the mass-minded despot as the hostile and prejudiced picture him. Fifthly, the U.S.S.R. has done so much in health services, education and social insurance and security, for the 170 millions who inhabit her territory, that only those who have never had to worry about such things will deny her care for the individual. Sixthly, and finally, although Communists believe that they are committed to uncompromising hostility to the Christian as to other religions, I firmly believe that their real quarrel is with Institutional Religion as they see it in both Eastern and Western Europe. And here they have much of my sympathy. Formal, traditional, orthodox religion was the enemy of the Founder of Christianity, even though He made use of what was good in it to convey His own message. It does not seem unjust to say that on the social issues of to-day the churches are timid, when they are not reactionary (with notable exceptions among their personnel), and that as corporate bodies they richly deserve the contempt, indifference or hostility which they receive from the majority of progressives. For all these reasons I have no desire to join a crusade against 'Bolshevism,' but am ready to take the U.S.S.R. as an ally in preventing war.

Does all this mean that I should fight for Socialism against Fascism with a good conscience? Alas, no.

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Although Fascist governments are legitimate objects of attack, the wretched people whom they oppress are not. Foolish and misguided though they may be, they still have not deserved the terrible punishment which gas, thermite and the latest methods of extermination would inflict. Again and again I cannot help asking myself 'Must it come to this?' However clear the rights and wrongs of the case, it must not come to the arbitrament of modern war if it is possible by any effort or sacrifice to avoid it. One function of the Pacifist is perfectly clear—he must do everything he can to avoid a 'show-down.' If diplomacy can prevent it, I am all for diplomacy, even though at the present time it is only the velvet glove which scarcely conceals the mailed fist. I do not trust any imperialist government, even my own, but in so far as the British Government is acting as peacemaker I wish it God-speed. I would forgive any politician anything if he succeeded in obviating an outbreak of hostilities. Unfortunately this attitude seems to involve fresh difficulties.

If I am right in thinking that the chief danger comes from Fascist Germany, and that the men who control her destinies would start a war to-morrow if they felt certain of winning—and any other view of the official German mentality seems to me mere sentimentality, then the obvious deduction is that a firm as well as a conciliatory attitude should be adopted towards her. But with that apparently innocent word 'firm' I have committed myself to the whole policy of British rearmament—provided that I can rely on the Government of the day to use this bargaining power for the ends of peace. But once I go so far, can I draw back? If, as I do, I favour a league of democratic and socialist states, whose armed forces are pooled, as the most practicable course left in the present world situation—a League that could command respect from the Fascist powers as well as be conciliatory—can I,

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supposing this last attempt failed, refuse to fight with those who have attempted it because it has not succeeded? Supposing Germany instigated a revolt among the German minority in Czechoslovakia, and then on the pretext that the disturbance was a danger to her safety—that Russia, for instance, was trying to gain control of the country—seized Czechoslovakia, should I want my country to join with France and Russia in telling Germany to release her grip on the victim? Or supposing that Germany and Japan made a concerted attack on Russia, should I want France and Great Britain to use their influence to make the aggressors retire? In both cases I should want my country to play this part—indeed, I cannot resist the conclusion, unpalatable though it is to me, that the knowledge that it would play such a part would be the best safeguard of peace. But if the exertion of moral and diplomatic pressure failed—what then? Can I, having gone so far, suddenly say ‘I shall not fight—I am a Pacifist.’ We are now back at the fundamental question with which we began: is it possible to resolve the conflict between the Idealist approach and the Realist?

Jesus I believe to have been the perfect Man. In His relations with the Universe, which He thought of as His Father’s, and with other human beings, whom He called ‘Brethren,’ He displayed the essentials of the good life, that all might see and understand and find salvation. On those who see that Truth and make it their own, there lies a compulsion to reveal to others, by their attitude towards them, the goodness of the life of comradeship and self-sacrifice. There is no other way of communicating the good news except by living it. Those who do not see the vision can no more be compelled to live as if they did than a blind man can be forced to enjoy the painting of Van Gogh. Jesus could not have communicated His message to the world with the help of an army, because

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you cannot convince a man that you love him, at the point of a sword. Let us recognize that a victory in war will not create a single Christian. It will create a million cynics, a hundred million atheists. So far the Idealist is completely right. War can achieve nothing of religious value to the participants save perhaps a belated realization that the world lacks something; and most men know that by this time. War is a measure of the failure of men to grasp the truths of Christianity, the failure of human beings to take up an appropriate attitude to one another. *If war occurs*, what should the individual do? In the war which actually threatens, should I take sides and fight or should I stand aside?

In the last resort, I think I should fight. I cannot put it more strongly. I have tried in an inadequate fashion to give some picture of the issues as they present themselves to me. Let me now try in conclusion to show how I feel forced into a judgment that runs counter to deep convictions, that involves my acting as I am certain Jesus would not.

The gospel of Jesus was not concerned solely with individual salvation. It spoke of the Kingdom of God. He prayed that it might come on earth as it already existed in Heaven. In other words, He was interested in corporate expressions of the injunction 'Love one another.' Earlier in this essay I have expressed my belief that the things symbolized by such terms as Democracy, Peace, Socialism, are essential expressions of the Christian spirit. It follows that I cannot be indifferent to the fate of these ideas. Although Christianity is greater and more comprehensive than any political ideal, and at the same time more intimate to the individual, yet it is not unconcerned with politics. Now politics is essentially a matter of the choice of the lesser of two evils. It deals with the lowest common denominator of large masses of people: it is concerned with better and not best. It is a reminder that Good and

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Evil are not static but dynamic; that in the world-process of which we are part, the two tendencies towards Better and Worse are constantly at work.

There is a process of moral as well as natural selection at work, and in that process the individual holds a position of responsibility—he must continually be choosing between alternative courses of action. At any given moment I can choose *between* alternatives—but I cannot choose the alternatives themselves: they are outside my control. So long as the choice offered me is between Peace and War I must choose Peace, and I must make all other choices that that implies. But when those two alternatives have gone by and the society in which I live has chosen War, I cannot refuse to choose between the next pair of alternatives. If I say ‘I shall not fight’ I am saying ‘I have no interest in this struggle: it is too dreadful to take part in: I cannot touch the unclean thing.’ It surely is dreadful enough, but I am afraid I cannot look on at it impartially. In a war between Fascism and Socialism, between Dictatorship and Democracy, I cannot in my heart remain neutral. The mere fact that war has broken out represents a denial of my religion, but the main burden of responsibility lies with the Fascist minded, and it is not unimportant whether they remain in control of affairs. It is not a matter of choosing war or peace: it is a matter of whether out of the mess something of permanent value will evolve. If men are killing one another, it still remains important whether at the end of the struggle the world is peopled with Hitlers or George Lansburys.

This whole problem of the Christian and War is the foremost instance of the old problem of ‘the lesser of two evils,’ of the ideal and the possible. The ‘absolute’ Pacifist bases his position on two fundamental convictions: the first, that war is wrong: the second, that it is *so* wrong that *no* price is too high to pay to avoid it. With the first

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statement I agree; but with the second I cannot. The price of peace in the world to-day is toleration of brutal injustice, the sacrifice of the helpless to the strong. The price in 1935 was Abyssinia. In 1936, Spain. In 1937, China. Is it to be Czechoslovakia in 1938? It may well be so, if Hitler thinks he will receive no opposition. I believe such slaughter of the innocents to be morally worse than a war resulting from a stand taken by the states who still retain governments with some civilized ideals.

The Pacifist wants to fight the world's battles with the pen rather than the sword. He is right. But when he says that a world where battles will be fought thus can be achieved by all the people who believe in it giving themselves up to be slaughtered by those who do not, then I think he is deceiving himself. The human race did not gain its ascendancy over animals by passive resistance. Nor, of course, did it do so by brute force. It did so by the use of intelligence, where necessary in alliance with force for destructive purposes. Is it not realistic to maintain that when a section of the human race *insists* on settling its differences at this primitive level of force, then the challenge has *got* to be met *at this level*? If constructive intelligence is *really* superior to a primitive gospel of force, shouldn't it be able to beat it *at its own game*? Those who put their trust in intelligence would naturally prefer to fight on their own ground. But intelligence is not *common ground* between the progressive and reactionary forces in the world. The only common ground is at the lower level, and it is at this level that the progressive forces must apply their superior intelligence.

So I do not think that there is a place for Pacifism in our present difficulties? Yes, I do. There is a place for it *inside* the Fascist countries. Those whose faith leads them to believe that their martyrdom for their faith might achieve something should not wait for war to break out.

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The martyr's crown awaits them *now* if they will go and preach their gospel in Germany. And they might not preach in vain. Martyrdom *is* very impressive, and calls forth a response from unexpected quarters. Many Communists have been martyred in Germany, yet Mr. H. A. L. Fisher quotes 7,000,000 as a possible figure for those Germans who retain their secret allegiance to this persecuted ideal. It is an ironical thought that probably the only effective passive resistance in war will come from them.

But for myself, I must confess that I believe things have gone too far for such remedies. The healer has been neglected, and now it is a job for the surgeon to rid Europe of its ‘perilous stuff.’ I do not imagine that love and kindness and gentleness are going to be vindicated at the sword's point in another World War. I think that it may be the Pacifists' vocation to keep these ideals alive through a brief Dark Age. The rest of us will be fighting for more fundamental things even than that. For Justice, for a rational economic order, for some security from international brigands. For people struggling at such a level, a man of the sensitivity and imagination of Jesus can have little to say. We can only hope that our part in the scheme of things is at least not inferior to those people who, like the Israelites of old, prepared the way for something better.

And so it comes about that I, who have plagued my friends for years with the violent conviction of my pacifism, should feel in the last analysis compelled to fight. Although I believe that I should be slaughtering the innocent, I should do so for the sake of the equally innocent unborn. Although I do not believe that war would benefit a single individual on either side, once it had broken out I should feel compelled to fight for those principles which seem to me the necessary conditions of the life of loving comradeship for the future. Believing

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that pacifism is the correct attitude to adopt towards a personal attack, I lack the faith to apply it to a mass struggle. It seems to me that when men sink to war they have returned to the animal kingdom, taking with them their human endowments to emphasize the monstrousness of the thing they do. But once the appeal has been made to brute force the struggle must be decided at that level. Let us not, however, have any claims that 'God is with us.' Jesus was not a military leader, and so long as we fight battles let us not have His name on our lips. Do not let us pretend that we are fighting for the Kingdom of God: if we must wage war let us be content to fight under less distinguished patronage. A repetition of the blasphemous ecclesiastical militarism of the Great War would be damnable.

If my country's Government put itself at the head of the Democratic and Socialist states of the world in resistance to Fascism, and as result of its efforts became involved in war, I should find it difficult not to support it. If a Popular Front Government were in office and called on me to fight, I know that I should be unable to resist its appeal, and that I should succumb to the combined propaganda for Democracy, Socialism, International Law and National Defence. I should fight, but without enthusiasm. If a British Government were found assisting Fascism against Socialism and Democracy, whether in the U.S.S.R. or anywhere else, I should feel compelled to resist it, by helping the inevitable General Strike movement, and even in the last resort by the use of force. Of all the dark possibilities that lie ahead, that one I hope I may be spared. But once war breaks out, I can see that non-resistance will be out of the question—Yes, I should fight.



*'FORCE—BUT NOT MURDER'*

CHRISTOPHER CADOGAN

Age 21—Left Eton 1934—Entered Magdalen College, Oxford, 1935—Reading Modern Greats—Contributor to *The New Outlook*—Chairman O.U. Next Five Years Group—Hopes to practise at the Bar.



## ‘FORCE—BUT NOT MURDER’

THERE is to-day a regrettable tendency to attach to political and religious labels an importance which is grossly overrated. The question of whether one would fight, and what one would fight for, is an intensely personal one, and in answering it the individual should endeavour to free himself from the shackles of party and creed and present his own point of view for what it is worth. I must therefore apologize if, in my efforts to avoid political clichés and party slogans, I confine myself to a subjective view.

I was born early in 1917; consequently my impressions of the World War are, to say the least, hazy. They told me later that it had been a war to end war; and afterwards the politicians had settled down in Paris to draft the Peace to end Peace. But it soon transpired that the War had not ended at all. French, British, American and Japanese troops were busy fighting in Russia against the Bolsheviks; no one quite knew why they were fighting; but after a time everyone was quite sure what they were fighting against, and they withdrew their troops. Was that the end of the War? Far from it. Politicians at home were animatedly deciding that Germany should be made to pay twelve times as much as she was capable of paying; and France, forgetting that the War was supposed to have ended, invaded the Ruhr and thus made Germany safe for the Nazis. Then Greece became mixed up in an affair with Italy and then in another one with Bulgaria. Poland and Lithuania remained for some time ‘in a state of war.’ In 1932 Bolivia and Paraguay carried on a private war in

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which no one except the armaments manufacturers and company promoters were allowed to interfere. In the same year Japan waged a war of 'self-defence' in Manchuria, and the League of Nations, to discover who really was the aggressor, sent out the Lytton Commission which arrived in time to witness the creation of Manchukuo as an 'independent' State.

Shortly afterwards Hitler came into power and began to demand the immediate return of numerous things. When he started in earnest to re-arm, the victorious powers held up their hands in horror and were deeply shocked when he reminded them that they had done practically nothing to reduce their own armaments. There was, indeed, a Disarmament Commission which had been discussing disarmament and setting up sub-commissions for about ten years. Then it was decided to hold a conference. The League had invited Russia to join with the others in discussing how the world was to disarm, and M. Litvinov, who was still new to the game, at once proposed that the best way to achieve disarmament was for the nations to disarm. This extraordinary suggestion was received by the delegates with horror and Lord Cushenden ruled that such a proposal was irrelevant and out of order. Later Lord Londonderry said something about bombing planes being retained which supplied the material for Socialist speeches for years to come. While the Socialists were still complaining about Lord Londonderry, Mussolini began his campaign (of self-defence) in Abyssinia. Many people thought that this would be an excellent opportunity to put an end to war. Sanctions were to be imposed but not the sanctions which would be effective. At the critical moment it was found that M. Laval had been acting even more shadily than other French politicians, and that the British navy was completely ready for action—except for the shells. Soon after-

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wards there broke out in Spain a new kind of war—a civil war between Right and Left, or Fascism and Democracy, or Nationalists and Bolsheviks; there were so many Germans, Italians, Russians, Frenchmen, undergraduates and Irishmen fighting that for a time some people wondered whether the Spaniards were taking any part in the war at all. Just as the news from this war was beginning to pall, Japan invaded China again, simultaneously demanding that an immediate state of friendship towards herself be set up in China, and supplementing the request with a few bombs dropped on women and children.

Whilst all this was going on, Conservatives clamoured for more and more arms, but refused to use them, and Socialists declared vehemently that we should fight, but refused to vote for the arms. And all the time there were people like George Lansbury, Dick Sheppard and Brig.-Gen. Crozier and the Quakers who refused to fight for anything. The problem was perplexing.

. . . . .

When I was at school the Oxford Union passed a motion declaring that it would not fight for King or Country. I remember reading columns in the *Daily Worker* praising this bold declaration of the Student Youth of Britain, captions urging us to ‘fight against war,’ and seeing in the *Morning Post* cruel caricatures of bespectacled and degenerate undergraduates chanting ‘We won’t fight’ as they marched down the High. Editors were snowed under in their offices with letters from women novelists and retired colonels, and from all the types between. Most people condemned the motion because they did not begin to understand what it really implied. They were unaware that those who voted for the motion consisted of complete Pacifists, Socialists, Communists,

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Conservatives, Liberals and supporters of the principle of Collective Security.

I did not join the O.T.C. because of illness; consequently, apart from four weeks' training as a recruit, I had no direct experience of an O.T.C. in action. But my friends had. They told me exciting stories about field days—how the rest of the battalion had been lost, and they had finished up at a pub—how the officer commanding their company had so arranged a machine-gun unit that it fired into their flanking company. Someone's trousers had been taken down twice on the way back, and the 'bus had finally crashed. I realized that I was missing something. The O.T.C. was obviously as good entertainment as a Crazy Week at the Palladium, but was it (I asked a friend who was going on to Sandhurst), was it a good preparation for war? Obviously not. Admittedly in modern strategy you must have infantry to occupy territory, but were these public schoolboys being taught to use long-range guns, or hand-grenades, or how to wear a gas-mask, or the elements of trench warfare? Were they learning anything that could be of any possible value to them in a war? Of course not. If you are logical, and want to prepare people for war, you should face the facts and not play soldiers according to Boer War strategy, but give them a taste of what modern conditions are likely to be. Generally speaking, the O.T.C.'s do not make militarists out of ordinary schoolboys. At that time I was not concerned about the O.T.C. nor about its inefficiency, for I had decided that in the event of war I would join the Air Force.

Before coming up to Oxford I spent some months in Germany, Italy, Austria, Switzerland and France, and came back with the conviction which is shared by nearly everyone—that none of the people in any country wanted war. They wanted to be left alone in peace, but they would fight if their leaders entered into a war. In face of

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their political bosses and the power of the Press, the masses in every country were powerless. The people who would be most affected by war had little or no influence on policy.

Such was my background when I came up to Oxford two years ago. Like everyone else up here, I wanted Peace, but I had only the vaguest notion how it was to be got. I disliked Colonel Blimp. I believed in the League of Nations. Suddenly events abroad put every thinking person in the position of asking: ‘What shall I do if war comes? Shall I fight?’ The question was extremely complex. The man-in-the-street was entwined with political arguments; he still groped in darkness, hedged in by prejudice and uncertainty.

Keeping these events and thoughts in view, I turn now to the immediate questions: ‘Would I fight, and what would I fight for?’ The most important issue is that of Unconditional Pacifism, the doctrine of non-resistance which is put forward in this country by the Peace Pledge Union. This doctrine is based on the belief that every human being has something of the Divine within him, and it is therefore a crime to treat humanity as a means to an end, and not as an end itself; to take human life is therefore criminal and quite unjustifiable. The background of this idea can be found in the writings of Locke, Rousseau, Kant, J. S. Mill and more particularly in the four gospels; and it has found practical expression in the actions of William Penn who maintained peace (by this means) with the American Indians for many years, and of Mahatma Gandhi who has achieved considerable success with his methods of absolute non-resistance in India. The Pacifist maintains that to make it plain to the enemy that you will not resist any measures which he may take against you is much more effective in promoting peace than defending yourself. Then you ask: ‘But

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supposing your declaration of non-resistance has no effect whatever on your potential aggressor, except to make him seize his opportunity and kill you—is not that taking life, and are you not materially assisting him to take life, by making it easier for him? Are you not acting directly against your principle which recognizes the sanctity of human life? Are you not committing suicide?’ To which he will reply: ‘Ah, but the enemy won’t kill you—your attitude will have such a tremendously strong moral effect on him that his hand will be stayed, and he will be sorry for even dreaming of attacking you.’ To this extent, then, the Pacifist’s belief is based on faith—it is idealistic and not realistic: but it would be idle and unjust to ignore the practical results which the method has indisputably achieved. One can indeed easily imagine that the system might be effective with the superstitious Indians when faced with a colony of white men, or with a liberal-minded viceroy who has had the sense to talk things over with the leader of the movement which practised the doctrine in India. But one hesitates before assuming an equal efficacy when dealing with a Hitler or a Mussolini or a Goering or any Russian commissar.

In addition to the more general philosophical grounds on which a Pacifist will ask you to consider and accept his thesis, there is the Christian basis. ‘If you call yourself a Christian and practise Christianity,’ I am often told, ‘you must surely be a Pacifist.’ Well, I do call myself a Christian and to the extent that I am at present able, I attempt to practise Christianity. What then should I, as a Christian, do when confronted with this dilemma? It is useless to turn to the Church of England for guidance, because on this subject, as on most of the important issues which greatly affect our lives, it is hopelessly divided and corrupt. We have on the one hand the late Canon Sheppard proclaiming Unconditional Pacifism as a



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Christian duty, and on the other hand the Archbishop of York, who is equally insistent: ‘The Christian knows as all men know that the behaviour of men can be modified not only by the radical method of spiritual conversion but also by the use of sanctions designed to promote some ideal end.’ From which it followed that the Archbishop supported sanctions against Italy.

Faced with this fundamental disagreement we must attempt to solve the problem ourselves. The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and the death of Jesus provide the best possible arguments for Pacifism. We are told to love our neighbour and to love our enemies, and to turn the other cheek. If necessary, we must die for our beliefs. That much is quite clear. But it seems to me that Christ was not only a supreme idealist who framed the best ethical code for the use of Western Man, but also a practical realist who was quite prepared to face the unpleasant facts of Man’s imperfection and to make allowances for his shortcomings, which have never been emulated by succeeding moralists. For instance, we find him admitting the necessity for maintaining a secular government (‘Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s’) and the temporary necessity of divorce (‘Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives’—‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication . . .’). We do not always find him putting his doctrine of non-resistance into practice. Thus John wrote: ‘And Jesus went up to Jerusalem and found in the Temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting. And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them out of the Temple and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables.’

We must remember that Christ lived under the efficient and peaceful administration of the Roman Empire, and

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preached unmolested for three years: His attitude, like that of John the Baptist, to soldiers, was never one of hostility. He had the utmost respect for the centurion ('I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel'). According to this analysis, then, we may safely say that whilst the basic or ultimate doctrine of Christ is non-resistance and the renunciation of violence as a means of securing ends, it also makes special allowances for special cases. It seems that Christ thought that in certain cases it was permissible to use force when no other means would be effective in influencing the people concerned.

Of one thing at least we can be certain—the next war will surpass everything in horror, cruelty, ruthlessness and inhumanity. One would have thought that the idea that war could still be heroic, romantic and pleasant—something like a glorified Rugger match—was not seriously entertained to-day. When we read Adam Lindsay Gordon's verses:

'To the cheer and the clarion the war music blended with war  
cry, the furious dash at the foe,  
The terrible shock, the recoil and the splendid sword, flashing  
blue rising red from the blow. . . .'

we know that the only thing we shall get from a war will be 'the terrible shock.' We cannot seriously believe nowadays that 'some corner of a foreign field' where an Englishman fell in the War 'is forever England.' And yet there are people who still glorify war. It has been said recently: 'Suppress trial by battle and you will reduce the race to the level of pigmies and eunuchs'; but it is not peace but war that produces the eunuchs, the paranoiacs and the mentally-unbalanced children. It is war and not peace which produces perverts like Goering, Streicher, Himmler and Roehm, and the nightmare characters who stalk across the early canvasses of George Grosz. After a

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war it is the C3's who begin to assert themselves. In Germany, owing to the pernicious teachings which have been inculcated into a pathetically regimented nation by Nietzsche and Treitschke, Rosenberg and Hitler, this attitude, which glorifies the use of force and praises war, is unfortunately prevalent. When Mussolini declared that a philosophical basis to Fascism must be discovered within a fortnight, Sorel, with his philosophy of force, was dug up out of obscurity to meet the demands of the Duce.

Now this attitude to force and war which is shared by both Fascists and Nazis, and to which even some Marxists are prone to subscribe, is fundamentally wrong and extremely dangerous. With them Force is treated as an end in itself—it is something heroic, romantic, mystic, something to be sought and revered. From which it is easy to deduce that War is Good in itself. The correct attitude should treat Force as a means to an end—by itself it is unimportant, but treated in relation to the ends which it achieves it merits consideration. Treating means as ends is a common perversion. Most people consider going to church more important than practising a religion. So we cannot isolate force, but must ask ourselves when we use it what its purpose is. It can only be justified in relation to the end for which it is employed. This may seem obvious, but it is too frequently ignored.

Robert Bridges wrote:

‘Needless taking of life putteth Reason to shame,  
And men so startle at bloodshed that all homicide  
May to a purist seem mortal pollution of soul;  
A mystical horror of it may rule in him so strong,  
That rather than be slayer he would himself be slain:  
But Fatherhood dispenseth with this vain taboo:  
The duty of mightiness is to protect the weak.’

In these lines Bridges is appealing to a deep-seated instinct in Man in his defence of force. The right of a father to use

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force to protect his wife and children is asserted; it is 'the duty of mightiness' to protect the weak. Most people, including myself, would subscribe to this view, but with the important stipulation that as Man progresses and the conditions necessitating protection from enemies disappear, so too ought that force, which is used to oppose evil, to vanish. In my belief it is perfectly justifiable to use force in international politics whilst the conditions demanding force remain. When we have to deal with Realpolitiker and megalomaniacs who understand only the language of force, we must use force. 'Justice without Force is impotent,' as Pascal put it. I can see nothing against using an international police force for the maintenance and enforcement of an international legal code agreed upon by those who subscribe to the police force; and it is indeed illogical for Pacifists to oppose such a force when they readily acquiesce in a police force for the maintenance of law and order within their own countries.

Moreover, I know many avowed 'Pacifists' who spend much of their time denouncing war, and who are prepared, nevertheless, to sacrifice their lives in a class war. These misguided people have worshipped long and faithfully at the altar of the Trinity—Marx, Engels and Strachey—and, taking as their gospel a scientifically erroneous economic doctrine, and an untenable and clumsy philosophy believe that war and all the evils which beset us to-day are due to a bogey called the Capitalist System, and assert that it is our duty to fight for the abolition of that system. Another of these wars to end war. They claim that the 'Class struggle' is an objective fact and that the dreary and endless Marxist volumes are merely 'throwing the searchlight of scientific analysis upon it' (to use a delightful phrase of Mr. Strachey's). By making people class conscious they hope to bring

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about the class war, and thus prepare the way for the classless society. Whilst declaring that they abhor violence, they predict that the abolition of classes and the rise of the proletariat must be accompanied by some violence 'which characterizes all the major activities of human life'(!), and they quote Marx as saying 'Force has always been the midwife of every old society pregnant with the new.'

Now I am quite prepared to admit that during the period of economic development under Capitalism there has been a class struggle, either open or latent; and so long as the motive of individual profit guides our industries, there will continue to be opposition between workers and their employers. But the pernicious part of the Marxist doctrine is that which gives the class struggle a metaphysical basis, which tells us to crystallize this class-consciousness, to widen the rift between classes, and so to bring about the civil war between classes—when it must be perfectly clear to anyone with a modicum of common sense that with the gradual but insistent supplanting of the profit-motive by the Public Utility or Public Trust principle, class differences, at least in this country and in America, are being progressively whittled down. As Mr. Keynes says: 'The battle of socialism against unlimited private profit is being won in detail hour by hour.' The transition from Capitalism to Socialism or Communism is perfectly possible without the revolutionary paraphernalia, which, arousing so much opposition as it does, merely proves a waste of life, wealth and time, all of which are valuable. Make no mistake about that opposition: if the workers are organized on a hostile basis, the Capitalists will evoke that latent Fascism which expresses itself in such peculiar ways in England, and instead of the workers' paradise so glibly promised by their leaders, we shall get

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a Fascist dictatorship under which the lot of the 'Proletariat' will be far harder than under almost any other form of Capitalism. I have met and known representatives of all classes, and I know that despite the terrible inequalities which exist and persist between Mayfair and Merthyr Tydfil, friendliness and co-operation between classes is much more widespread nowadays than ever before. Indeed, the chief difficulty in class co-operation comes, in my experience, from the 'middle' and 'lower' classes who construct for themselves multiple, petty, and rigidly exclusive class barriers.

But my Marxist friends ask me: 'Supposing this peaceful transition of which you talk so easily proves to be impossible, and a civil war between Fascist and "Democratic" (equals "Communist") forces or between Right and Left broke out, what would you do then?' Now I am perfectly well aware that Christianity cannot be successfully practised until we have developed some sort of Communistic economic system. But I cannot endure the prospect of killing my own countrymen, people I have known and seen, and, except for their political beliefs, liked. Thus while my sympathies would be with the Left if any such struggle were forced upon us, I should not take part in the fighting, but would devote my energies to promoting peace. You may object that if I believe that the setting up of a Communistic economic organization is the *modus operandi* of Christianity, then I should fight for Communism because I would be fighting for Christianity. The difficulty is this—that while I should be fighting for Christianity, I should be pretty sure that the others would not be fighting for anything of the sort. This is specially applicable to a war fought in the cause of International Socialism. I repeat, I should do my best to promote peace, both in a civil war and in an international war fought specifically on this Class issue. 'Vain

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hope,’ say the Marxists. Maybe, but if we exert ourselves now to bring about this peaceful transition, then we shall progressively reduce the conditions for, and chances of, a class war.

We are also faced with the possibility of being asked to fight for King and Country. I cannot seriously believe with my Socialist friends that this country would ever wage a war of imperialist expansion (police measures on the N.W. frontier of India can hardly be included in this category), or of aggression against some other world power. In such a war I should certainly not fight. So we are faced with the less improbable case of a war of defence against an invading power, a war in which we had been deserted by those whom we had trusted as allies or friends—in other words, let us assume for argument’s sake that ‘Collective Security’ had broken down and that the Germans were threatening to invade this country. What would our chances be against the might of Germany’s armed forces? In the air we should be at the moment slightly superior, on the sea definitely superior, but on land vastly inferior. Should we answer the call to defend our King and Country? If we found ourselves in this unenviable position, I admit that there would be a strong temptation to obey our instincts, trust to our navy and air force and attempt once more to repel the enemy and to crush Prussian militarism once and for all time. But I honestly believe that our best chances would lie in passive resistance. (Ah! you will say, ‘but you have just said that when dealing with people who understand only the language of force, we must use force.’ Yes, but that judgment rests on the assumption that we are acting collectively in Europe. In this case conditions are different, and we are facing the enemy unaided.) We should have to scrap or attempt to hide in the furthest corners of these islands our war material and allow the Germans to invade

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this country. We should suffer privations in refusing to render them any assistance, but I doubt if the German mentality would be able to deal with such a situation. I cannot imagine the Germans successfully working the immensely complex and illogically devised machinery of local government, and it is quite possible that after a few months they would develop an inferiority complex, and would give up in despair and disgust. But such a situation is not easy to visualize. It requires a severe stretch of the imagination to consider ourselves isolated, practically helpless, with the Dominions and Colonies, Russia, France and the U.S.A. standing by unheeding and uninterested. The chances are that with changed and easier conditions, and with a will to work its excellent machinery, the engine of Collective Security would soon be running; and we should all be lined up under the banner, not of 'King and Country,' but of 'Collective Security and the League of Nations.'

Would I fight for this system which has been called 'Collective Security'? Since the World War, various attempts have been made to work a system of 'Pooled Security'—under which the signatories of the security pact undertake to put their armed forces at the disposal of any signatory-state which finds itself the victim of aggression by any State within or outside the system. Aggression is not easy to define. In the case of Italy and Japan, there could be no doubt—but it would have been extremely difficult to decide who was the aggressor in 1870 or even in 1914. This difficulty is partially (cf. Japan's invitation to the League to send out a Commission in 1932) overcome by the appeal to arbitration. Any disputant State refusing to submit the quarrel to an Arbitration commission would automatically brand itself the aggressor. The threat of military sanctions *has* been effective in the history of the League—the Graeco-



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Bulgarian quarrel, the Yugo-Slav dispute and the Saar plebiscite are only a few of the examples of the League's successes which are much too often forgotten or merely ignored. One remembers bitterly the diseases one has caught, but one nearly always forgets to give credit to medicines which have prevented disease. I wish those who condemn the League and Collective Security would think twice before saying 'It never has worked: it never can work.' Admittedly, when faced with a dispute which involved directly one of the ex-allies, the will to employ the excellent machinery of Geneva was sadly lacking. Over Manchuria, the delegates, who were hopelessly ignorant of affairs and conditions in the Far East, decided, wrongly, that the scene of warfare was too distant to permit of collective action being effective. In the case of Abyssinia, they decided for a variety of reasons that military sanctions could not be applied, and resorted to economic sanctions of the wrong sort, and expected to see them effective despite the gross inequalities between Italy and Abyssinia. These recent set-backs and the absence of the U.S.A., Germany, Italy and Japan from Geneva have contributed to the drastic loss of confidence in the League, and in the principle of Pooled Security. So to-day we see effective action being taken outside the League—at Nyon; and the transference of discussions to London and Brussels to avoid further humiliation of the League.

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The alternatives to Pooled Security under the League are few. Lord Beaverbrook advocates armed isolation, but that policy is impracticable for reasons which are too well-known to be stated here. Some people demand a return to the old secret methods of diplomacy; but we have only to turn back to such painful episodes as the Bjoerkoe agreement, the Buchlau talks, the meeting at

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Konopischt, the agreement between France and Great Britain respecting Morocco and Egypt, the Treaty of London, and the Hoare-Laval Agreement, to remind ourselves that this method is full of dangers, and leads only to the system of carefully-balanced secret alliances which must sooner or later lead to war. Another expedient, for temporary use only, would be an open alliance of Great Britain, the U.S.S.R., France and the U.S.A., to which could be added many small democratic countries in Europe; but this alliance does not appear to be materializing at the moment. It would certainly be better than dividing Europe up into Fascist and Communist blocs which is an alternative which simply invites a trial of strength.

To me it seems obvious that we must revive the system of Pooled Security, but with important modifications. First we must ensure that the co-operating nations give up their national sovereignty, and delegate sovereignty to a council representing those nations. Secondly, we must attempt at once to set up an international air force. I do not believe that the obstacles, political or technical, in the path of an international police force, the first component of which would be the air arm, are as great as they are alleged to be. At the same time, until such a force can be given practical shape, the General Staffs of the signatory powers must meet every year to discuss plans, and each government must openly declare its commitments. After this force has been properly planned and co-ordinated, and during its process of development, we must do all in our power to satisfy legitimate grievances. The League must not become, as the Socialists would like it to become, a weapon for maintaining the Treaty of Versailles and the *status quo*. Thus I see in a revived 'Pooled Security' system, the only hope of avoiding war.

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But while I am ready to support the use of force in this respect and am prepared to believe that such a war which it would be called upon to wage would be amply justified, I realize that the best defence is attack; that success will attend him who kills most women and children and disorganizes the economic life of the civil population of the enemy the soonest. The idea of killing someone is, except in certain special cases (i.e., respecting individuals) utterly repellant to me. Few of us take easily to murder. I 'get no kick out of' shooting a sitting rabbit, and none from watching a hare writhing in its death agony. And I am sure that killing men, even though they were as heavily armed as myself, would not in any instance appeal to me. Bombing is not the greatest sport in the history of mankind, as Vittorio Mussolini claims. Consequently I should find myself in the somewhat illogical position of being unable to take up arms in a cause of which I thoroughly approved. But in warfare there are plenty of useful jobs to be done, which do not involve killing. I should have no moral scruples in engaging in such activities as mine-sweeping or driving Red Cross lorries, since they are not only indispensable to the cause for which you are fighting, but as dangerous as any other activity.

You will say that my answer to the problem is full of contradictions, that my position is illogical, and that I have not the courage of my convictions. But to me the position is at the moment quite clearly defined. I know quite well what I should do in a war. But I cannot believe another war is unavoidable. I cannot agree with pessimists like Oswald Spengler who claim that Western civilization is declining: I believe that our civilization, such as it is, has something in it which was not present in the civilization to which Spengler compares our own; it has something which Walter Lippmann has called 'the

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Invention of Invention.' I know that man will need no 'steeling of his soul' in battle to keep himself virile and above the level of 'pigmies and eunuchs.' I know that he will have plenty of difficulties to overcome, in subjecting the machine to himself, and in ordering the economic system so that the causes of war are reduced to a minimum. And when Man has achieved this he can spend his leisure in the pursuit of the Arts, the things of the Spirit which alone have permanent value. For these things to come about we must have Peace. The policy of Collective Security and the creating of an International Police Force, is the only way forward: for such a policy I will work and agitate always. But I will never do murder.

*‘JUST HOW HUMANE CAN WE AFFORD TO BE?’*

LYALL WILKES

Age 22—Educated at Newcastle Grammar School and Balliol College—Ex-Secretary Oxford Union Society—Ex-Chairman O.U. Labour Club—Ex-Member *Isis* Staff—Ex-Secretary Oxford University Empire Society—Prospective Labour Candidate Newcastle (Central)—Now reading for the Bar.



## ‘JUST HOW HUMANE CAN WE AFFORD TO BE?’

ON the evening of November 28th, 1915, the Bishop of London (A. F. Winnington-Ingram, D.D.), preaching in Westminster Abbey, said:

‘Kill Germans, to kill them, not for the sake of killing, but so save the world, to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young men as well as the old, to kill those who have shewn kindness to our wounded as well as those fiends who crucified the Canadian Sergeant. . . . As I have said a thousand times, I look upon it as a war for purity, I look upon everyone who dies in it as a martyr.’

It is in my view unfortunate that the forces of atheism, social revolution, and materialism, place a much higher value on human life than do the forces of religion, liberalism, and humanity generally. It is unfortunate because it places us at a perpetual disadvantage. The Socialist guardians of the German democratic Republic allowed themselves to be illegally swept from office like so many hired servants. Almost proudly, Carl Severing and Otto Braun announced that by their ‘reasonableness’ they had saved Germany from Civil War. In Austria, Otto Bauer, leader of the most successful and intelligent social democratic movement of all time, with the overwhelming support of the Trades Unions and all the liberal democratic forces, yielded—such was his anxiety to avoid what he termed a ‘blood-bath’—to a mere threat—as the contemptuous Communists had always said he would.

No such scruples divide and weaken the Fascist and religious movements of to-day: at the correct moment the Sermon on the Mount is invariably unflinchingly replaced

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by *Mein Kampf* or the Thirty-Nine Articles: in an instant the whole machinery of Church and State swings with quiet efficiency into action against whatever happens at that particular moment to be the 'enemy'—the Hun, Soviet Russia, or the Strikers of 1926. During the years 1914-1918 you may search the ranks of the bishops for some slight sign of a generous humanitarian spirit, for some condemnation of the filth and brutality of war. You will be disappointed. To-day, menaced by the growth of cultured humanism, religious indifference, or scientific scepticism—call it whatever you like—menaced by the success of Anti-God as exemplified by the success of Socialism in the Soviet Union, they are energetically preparing the nation for the coming war in defence of State and Christianity with talk of 'National Obligation,' 'Moral Duty to our fellow-citizens,' 'defence of religion, family life and all that Christianity holds dear.'<sup>1</sup>

At odd and peculiar moments they remember 'Thou Shalt Not Kill.' In debates on Euthanasia and Birth Control in the House of Lords, the phrase 'Sanctity of human life' is rolled around many an ecclesiastical tongue. But upon the main issues their mind is made up. When the Pope congratulates Mussolini on the triumph 'of a good and great people' in Abyssinia; when scarce a single clerical voice is raised against the bombing by the R.A.F. of helpless native women and children in Northern Rhodesia, Burma and India; when the hunger-marchers

<sup>1</sup>'We know only too well that in Russia a vast community is being poisoned by an aggressive atheism and by a doctrine of class warfare which is Anti-Christian, and we must be ever vigilant to prevent the poison infecting our own people.'—ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY in Broadcast Address, December 27th, 1936.

'In the opinion of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York circumstances might arise in which participation in war would not be inconsistent with their duty as Christians. The Archbishop of York expressed his disagreement with the . . . pacifist position as being based on an incomplete understanding...of the Gospel as contained in the New Testament.'—Joint Declaration by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, November, 1936.



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are condemned from pulpits; when the Bishop of Durham attacks the Jarrow marchers ‘for flaunting their poverty before the nation’; to talk of the Christian conception of human life is to talk nonsense. No-one to-day believes in the sanctity of human life: post-war history has taught us only one truth—that property and religion, when menaced, will shoot mercilessly and without pity. Bauer and Severing preached class-war: their opponents practised it—in Austria with the open, in Germany with the tacit, consent of the religious forces. The choice which to-day confronts Socialists, Liberals and Radicals the world over is to use violence or be destroyed by it: the insistent question which somehow must be answered is—‘Just how gentle and humanitarian can we who want a rational world order afford to be?’

War is the ultimate atrocity. Editors and politicians who take a holiday jaunt along the front, personally conducted and carefully shielded, may come back talking cheerfully of war. That is what they are sent for. Soldiers and statesmen do not usually think of remote results: yet because civilization is eternally dependent for its existence on the disinterested pursuit of truth and the integrity of scholarship, war is a way of suicide for all who wage it. The perversion of the intellect—from which we suffer so greatly to-day—which is the invariable accompaniment of war, is infinitely more dangerous than the perversion of the body: for Reason, distorted from its purpose to comprehend truth and serve mankind, becomes more devilish than ever mere bestiality could be.

‘A thing which has struck me, and I have spoken of it elsewhere, is the way in which the language of romance and melodrama has now become true. It is becoming the language of our normal life. The old phrases about “dying for freedom,” about “Death being better than dishonour”—phrases that we

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thought were fitted for the stage or for children's stories, are now the ordinary truths on which we live—Romance and melodrama were a memory, broken fragments living on, of heroic ages in the past. We live no longer upon fragments and memories, we have entered ourselves upon a heroic age.'—PROFESSOR GILBERT MURRAY.<sup>1</sup>

'To kill Germans is a divine service in the fullest acceptance of the term.'—THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON WILBERFORCE.<sup>2</sup>

'The Germans are congenitally unfit to read our poetry: the very structure of their organs forbids it. . . . The German who can read passable English is yet to be found.'—SIR ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH.<sup>3</sup>

War is the enemy of man because it is the enemy of the intellect. It can only exist by reason of lies, misrepresentations and distortions. Thus, mothers always think of their sons as dying for their country when in fact they are killing for it. When the Archbishop of Canterbury talks of the Christian use of 'the sword,' he should obviously be talking of the Christian use of the thermite bomb or the bayonet charge. The word 'war' is now inadequate to describe a relationship in which all sense of personal conflict—except on the rarest occasions—is absent, a relationship governed and decided by the relative efficiencies of engines of destruction. It is agreed on all sides that war can only be justified if it is waged against an 'aggressor': but the enemy is always the 'aggressor.' Men would certainly hesitate to kill Smith, Jones, Robinson; the terms Communist, Fascist, Englishman, Chinaman, help to falsify the issue and attempt to make political and impersonal the most personal of all acts—the act of murder. The question 'Would I Fight?' is meaningless: the real question is 'For what ends am I willing to blow

<sup>1</sup>*Ethical Problems of the War*, pp. 22-23. See also 1914-1918 publications of H. G. Wells, A. D. Lindsay, Ramsay Muir, Chesterton, Belloc, for similar statements.

<sup>2</sup>Preaching in St. Margaret's Church—see *Hansard*, January 20th, 1916.

<sup>3</sup>'The Huns and Literature'—cited in *Cambridge and War*.

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women and children to pieces, devastate cities, destroy men by use of gas and bacteria?’

The question put in this way disgusts and repels men of humane feeling. Since most Liberals and democrats are imaginative, intelligent men, they would say that the toleration of any evil is better than its attempted redress by modern weapons of war. The present world situation is entirely governed by this factor. Modern war and social revolution is so terrible, humane men are so loth to wage either, that the *threat* of war has become as successful as war for the achievement of results. The initiative in world affairs and in the successive crises has therefore passed to the Fascist peoples who appear to be less troubled by humanitarian illusions: so that Democracy and Socialism are in perpetual retreat.

The dilemma which to-day faces the Liberal, is whether or no modern warfare has become so destructive, barbarous, and stupid a way of ‘settling’ disputes that its aid should never be invoked under any circumstances, or whether it is not now necessary for men on the Left to become as determined and ruthless as the authoritarians, militarists, and Fascists on the Right, and so to be as prepared to achieve their aims through misery and bloodshed as your out-and-out reactionaries and dictators.

. . . . .

In the last war I would have been a conscientious objector. No principle was at stake in this war: the misery, the waste, the sacrifice was—for nothing. For all its vastness the war was trivial. The contention that we were fighting for democracy was obviously rubbish so long as Czarist Russia was our ally: the contention that we were fighting for the rights of small nations was equally ridiculous in view of our dealings with Ireland and Persia: the contention that we fought for the equality

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of all peoples, races, and religions would have sounded strange in the ears of a South African native. Finally, the men who fought hardest against German 'autocracy' were the men who had attacked Pacifism and Liberalism at home. Although it is easy to be wise now, I do not think I could have been so stupid as not to realize that there were enough enemies of peace and democracy at home to render a British victory not a victory over militarism but a victory of the British military machine over the German. The differences between Mr. Winston Churchill and the Kaiser were not great enough to have persuaded me that they were worth the sacrifice of my own life or anyone else's. But in the world situation of to-day Pacifism is not enough: Pacifism constitutes admirable morality, sound psychology, but—for a Socialist—bad politics. Because war is terrible I am not willing to deliver the future into the hands of those who are perpetually proclaiming their readiness to fight—into the hands of Lord Londonderry, Goering, Chiappe, Yeats-Brown, and the others.

All government is based upon the right to take human life whenever it is deemed necessary or desirable: the names of Casement, André, Zinoviev, Sacco, Vanzetti, denote only one or two individual victims of this right. To-day, every society, every creed, every government, claims the power to conscript all their able-bodied male citizens and compel them to kill or be killed. Stalin, Mr. Eden,<sup>1</sup> Mussolini, Mr. Baldwin,<sup>2</sup> Hitler—all are willing

<sup>1</sup>'The independence and integrity of Belgium is a vital interest for this nation and Belgium could count upon our help were she ever the victim of aggression . . . it will be found that the terrible weapons that science has forged can be wielded with no mean courage by peoples who love their freedom.'—MR. EDEN speaking at Savoy Hotel Luncheon, November 28th, 1936.

<sup>2</sup>'We are a tremendous obstacle to that kind of slave state spreading further West, and it may well be that the day may come when those who have still preserved their freedom will have to stand together lest freedom perish from the earth.'—MR. BALDWIN, speech at Bonar Law College, Ashridge, December 1st, 1934.

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under certain conditions to destroy life. The only relevant questions are—(a) Whose life? (b) For what end?

For myself, I am willing to shell, bomb, and poison my fellow human beings in order to achieve the defeat of Fascism in this or any other country, the building of Socialism in this or any other country, the liberation of the coloured and backward peoples, the abolition of colour and racial discrimination—in short, I am willing to kill for the protection and perpetuation of those principles of economic and social life which are in process of being worked out in the U.S.S.R.

This is not a chauvinist attitude. Every day anti-Socialists in some part of the world are taking life whilst defending the institution of private property, whilst defending National or Imperial interests or the maintenance of doctrines of race superiority in India, in South Africa, or in the Southern States of America. The issue is between those who believe in the essential equality and brotherhood of men and those who do not: between those who believe in the concept of the international society and those who believe in the tribal ordering of life with its absurd symbolism and mythology—the flag, the anthem, the monarch: between those who believe in the righteousness of the exploitation of man through the institution of private property and those who do not. The choice is not between violence and peace: it is between totemism and civilization.

Somewhere deep at the roots of modern life, with more or less sharpness of definition, these ultimate principles are contending: and if men hesitate before the task of achieving a new civilization, if they draw back because no new order of society can be born without violent conflict, they will not achieve an era of peaceful stability. The alternative to the violence entailed by the raising of human life to a new level is the violence entailed by the

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decline of capitalistic society, the break-up of such little civilization as exists as a result of the conflicts of rival dying imperialisms.

I often hear men declare that they cannot subscribe to revolutionary socialism because it might well entail the taking of human life. Such men cannot see that the existence of capitalism as a political and economic institution demands a continuous and useless sacrifice of human life. The industrial revolution sacrificed—in the pursuit of private profit—thousands of young children working in factory and pit, stunted the lives of millions, and exacted a toll of human misery and degradation which the bloodiest social revolution could never approach. The predatory colonial wars of the nineteenth century, the Zulu, the Afghan, the Boer wars, the imperialist war of 1914-1918 with its immense and futile waste of life, are only part of the price which men are continually asked to pay for the existence of capitalism; though the men who pay that price are invariably drugged by the most unscrupulous propaganda to believe that they die for the furtherance of some more noble ideal. To-day the world cannot disarm because disarmament would mean a breakdown in capitalist world economy. Statesmen and economists of all nations recognize—and dread—the fact that only in another world war is there possibility of a temporary solution of the conflicts of capitalism.

The value capitalism places upon human life is infinitesimal. The Englishman has generally been in favour of peace in a vague sort of way—he liked his wars to be fought at a distance and in the name of God if possible. Moreover, peace represented that peculiar combination of the ideal and the profitable which has always recommended itself to Englishmen. Unfortunately there are numerous signs to-day that the growing war fever is producing a state of mind in this country which regards

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killing and the preparations for killing as the only proper occupation for any able-bodied young man: and the Archbishop of Canterbury—presumably as part of his campaign for a ‘recall to religion’—allows us to believe that as well as killing for the Holy Ghost a Christian is justified in killing for the protection of Trade Routes.

With the campaign for recruiting, this country has, I think, forfeited its last claim to be considered civilized. The mentality of the Brigadier-General who advised ‘nice girls never to walk out with men who weren’t at least in the Territorials,’ the morals of the politicians who consider it good to bring all the resources of a nation-wide skilled publicity campaign to bear on semi-illiterate unemployed youths in order to persuade them that the only way out of their misery is to devote themselves to the destruction of human life, passes all understanding, until one remembers that it is perhaps typical of a class so afraid of its approaching demise that it will throw overboard every pretence of civilization if it may the better defend itself.

And so everything is done to idealize the street-corner lout who joins up: the patriotic filth of the music-halls is reinforced by the sexual bait of ‘brighter uniforms.’ Good old Tommy Atkins! The truth is, that it would be difficult to discover anyone less used to thinking than the average soldier or sailor. It is not his fault. The primary purpose of the military machine is to blunt his sensibilities, to degrade his conception of human life, to make him tough and insensitive to the last degree. The primary purpose of army life is to overcome the normal man’s dislike of killing and being killed. There is not a man who, caught up in the military machine of the last war, was not brutalized by it. Civilization and the soldier cannot exist side by side: Mr. Duff Cooper and the

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National Government have made it perfectly clear they are willing to sacrifice both.

I believe that this country—in common with all other capitalist countries—has now little left to offer humanity. I believe that to-day Capitalism and Fascism have become the enemies of all true learning, science and culture. I believe that if civilization is to continue it is essential that the capitalist structure of society should be radically changed and I believe that rather than submit to Socialism, the captains of industry, and the upper middle classes generally, will throw over the democratic forms of government and resort to Fascism—as in Germany, as in Austria, as in Italy.

Every act of the National Government since 1931—from support of the illegal German rearmament of Heligoland, the capitulation over Danzig, and the toleration of Italian and Japanese Fascist aggression to its open attack on the Franco-Soviet Pact and its support of the farce of Non-Intervention in Spain—proclaims clearly to anyone with elementary intelligence that British Capital whenever a crisis arises, is prepared to line up in defence of International Capital—i.e., International Fascism—as indeed it must for the sake of its own survival. Remembering this, I sincerely hope I have managed to discard every vestige of what Mr. Baldwin and Lord Beaverbrook understand by the word ‘patriotism.’

That does not mean that I will stand by and allow Herr Hitler to annex Great Britain. I do not for one moment believe he will soon attempt to attack his very faithful ally of the last few years. But if by some miracle war should come between England and Germany, I would fight, and the Labour Party would be failing in its duty if it did not fight also. But the Movement should take great care to explain through its propaganda for what it is fighting: it should proclaim that in fighting German



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Fascism it is only carrying forward the class struggle: that since by the force of events the Government has been compelled to arm the workers and cannot exist without their help, once German Fascism is defeated the workers must utilize all the circumstances in their favour—the war-weariness, the chaos, the inevitable discontent—to overthrow capitalism at home. In addition, the British Labour Movement should proclaim by every means possible that the German workers can achieve the overthrow of German capitalism much more quickly and much more effectively than can English capitalism, that once they have done this, German workers and English workers together will more easily be able to defeat English Capitalism and abolish that competitive system of society which has always inherent in its structure the roots of war. I do not think this is a Utopian or far-fetched picture. Mr. Baldwin was dreading its possibility equally as much as I welcome it, when he said in the House of Commons, ‘After the next war the peoples of the world . . . will turn in anger on the leaders who have brought this destruction upon them.’

Race hatred and racial persecution is probably the agent of more misery and suffering to-day than any other factor. Hitler did not evolve his racial theories for himself; the British have practised race persecution in its most developed and refined degree for centuries. The whole basis and justification for the British Empire lies in doctrines of racial superiority.

Sir John Harris is rightly regarded as the greatest living authority on the condition of the native peoples within the Empire. In the December 1936 *Contemporary Review*, in an article on the South African Protectorates, he speaks of ‘the relentless process of driving the native ever lower down the scale of human existence, until he is

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becoming a veritable outcast from the society of man and a degraded helot in the development of his own soil' and goes on to illustrate 'the impoverishment of the people who are groaning under taxation which they cannot pay and which compels over 50 per cent. of the able-bodied men to seek a livelihood in the . . . unhealthy mines far from their homes.' The colour-bar is applied rigorously everywhere within the Empire and legislation passed at the demand of the South African Labour Party restricts the native to low-level unskilled tasks. The method adopted is the exclusion of all natives from any employment in which machinery is used. The native is regarded purely as a source of cheap labour: hut and poll taxes are carefully fixed everywhere at a figure in excess of the sum the native can gain from the working of his own land or the sale of his own produce.

Thus he is compelled to obtain the money by the only means open to him—work in the mines—for the only alternative is prison. By means of such forced labour amazing profits are being made to-day by the mining companies of Africa.

Even by work in the mines the heavy taxation cannot always be met. In 1935, a commission was appointed by the Governor of Nyassaland with the Director of Education as chairman, to inquire into and report on 'the exodus of natives from Nyassaland to seek work outside.' It was found that 'over 50 per cent. of the able-bodied men over the whole Protectorate were forced to leave their families and their homes in a desperate attempt to meet the demands of the Tax-Gatherer'. The report speaks of 'the disorganization of tribal life,' 'the health of the people adversely affected,' and 'widespread venereal and pulmonary diseases.' 'So far,' the Report states, 'no attempt has been made by the authorities to check internal disorganization and strengthen the foundations of native

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society before they collapse altogether.’ Finally, the Report reveals that, ‘In Basutoland the 28 shillings tax cannot be paid, for even in fairly normal years the receipts to each tax-payer have often been below £1. In five districts examined, taxation absorbed the whole of the wages and the entire amount paid for the crops for a whole year, *leaving not a penny piece for the natives to live on.*’

In the Report of the Government Commission appointed to inquire into the disturbances in the Copperbelt of Northern Rhodesia, 1935,<sup>1</sup> in which the air force and the military were used to kill under circumstances of the utmost brutality many natives who struck work when the local authorities imposed an illegal increase in taxation, conditions at the mine compound of Mufulira are described.<sup>2</sup>

‘It appeared that the compound manager was in the habit of punishing the natives under his control by boxing their ears. This boxing of the ears was by no means a casual cuff on the side of the head but was a deliberate punishment. The offending native was made to stand and hold his head sideways in a stiff position, and then blows . . . on the side of the head were administered. . . . The compound records were produced and showed that 60 cases of this punishment had taken place in a year. This practice in the large majority of cases resulted in the rupturing of the ear-drum and “The Commission must express their regret<sup>3</sup> that the management who appear to have had knowledge of this practice did not . . . direct it to cease.” ’

The attitude of the mine-owners towards their native employees is well illustrated by the statement of a mine overseer—a Mr. Goodall:

‘I issued instructions that every opportunity should be taken of showing an aggressive attitude. . . . Under the slightest provocation police and military were to attack demonstrators with stout staves and butt ends of rifles.’<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cmd. 5009: H.M. Stationery Office, 1935.

<sup>2</sup>at p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>at p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>at n. 21.

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On page 32 of this extraordinary report we learn how in Africa a white man without justification of any kind is permitted wilfully to shoot natives without there being any danger of his prosecution by the authorities. A case is cited with full details.

Culturally and politically, the condition of the native in the British Empire is appalling. Any form of genuine trade union organization is unheard of, and any attempt to create it is a penal offence: there is in force a strict censorship of literature: in the whole of the Union of South Africa there are only five qualified native doctors: universities, schools, clubs, professions—all are barred to him: his movements are restricted by pass-laws: his family is herded into compounds: by every legislative device imaginable he is given to understand he is an inferior being, fit only to labour in servility for the profit of his white master. In Kenya Colony the average annual amount spent by the Government on a white child is £2 18s. 3d.; on an African child, 8d.

The native in the British Empire is treated worse than the Jew in Germany: his ill-treatment, like the ill-treatment of the Jew, is a product of hysterical fear and constitutes in itself an unconscious confession of inferiority by the oppressor. In spite of repression, Communism makes rapid headway among the natives. I hope that on the day Black Africa rises in anger against the exploiter, the Labour and Communist parties of the world will help in the fight for a Soviet Africa. That is surely one of the causes worth killing for.

The creed of Pacifism in view of oppression and degradation such as this, appears to me to be wholly mischievous. From Canon Sheppard's exposition of the Pacifist's case in *We Say No* it is difficult to realize that there are evil men and scoundrels directing the policies

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of governments to-day. Canon Sheppard thinks evil of no man: I do—the facts force me to. The Fascist Anti-Semitic thug in the East End of London terrorizing Jewish women and children, or the present rulers of Germany who, in order that they may carry out the incredible Anti-Jewish atrocities set forth and fully documented in *The Yellow Spot*, have sought to recreate in German youth the mentality of the Middle Ages, are men with no claims upon the compassion of humane men and women. There are, I am afraid, many men living to-day whom I could enjoy killing in cold blood, believing that I was ridding the world of men who were immeasurably lower than the beasts. Of course, there are difficulties. I might be willing to kill them as individuals and yet hesitate in time of war to drop bombs haphazard on Berlin, thus causing the deaths of many innocent and possibly admirable men, women and children. But absolute Pacifism as a principle—the principle of the universal sanctity of human life—is ridiculous. Such beliefs are invariably confined to the comfortable, to those who are ignorant of the facts of economic exploitation and have never experienced it for themselves. The worker is under no delusion as to the sanctity of human life under modern industrial and economic conditions, under the rigours of the Means Test. *I have never yet known a Pacifist who was on the dole, nor have I ever known a Liberal who earned less than £200 a year.*

The Soviet treatment of national minorities is an example to the world. In Russia the national minorities once persecuted under capitalism have gained their freedoms: Anti-Semitism has been made a crime: theories of racial inferiority or superiority are regarded as an unsavoury capitalist joke: each of the 160 new national cultures and groups are regarded as free and equal, each

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with its own unique contribution to make to the building of Socialism. Stalin in his political report to the 16th Party Congress states: 'The development of national cultures must proceed with redoubled strength after the introduction and establishment of general compulsory education in the respective national languages . . . only if national cultures develop will it be possible really to draw the nationalities into the cause of Socialist construction.'

Here is one instance of how the national cultural policy of this 'godless' country works.

The economic position of the Bokhard Jews during the Czarist regime was appalling. In addition to the 650 special anti-Jewish laws of the Czarist Government, the local authorities and the Mohammedan Church had their own anti-Jewish laws. The Jews in the cities of Bokhard were forced to live in ghettos and were treated as pariahs. They were made to wear special hats as a distinguishing mark. No Jew was allowed to walk in the streets in rainy weather for fear that a raindrop might splash from the 'unclean' Jew on to the Mohammedan, who would thus be defiled. A Jew was not allowed to ride a horse because a horse was considered too noble a creature to carry an 'unclean' Jew on its back. Ninety-five per cent. of the Bokhard Jews, denied all educational facilities, were illiterate: forty per cent. were paupers.

During the last ten years the conditions of Bokhard Jewry have been transformed. Fifteen Jewish collective farms have been established on which more than 3,000 Jews have settled. Twenty-three per cent. of Bokhard Jewry are now employed in industry, twenty-one per cent. are now members of artisan societies, thirty-four per cent. have found work in Government offices. Illiteracy has been abolished. There are now fifty-five Jewish schools in Bokhard, in which seven thousand children receive daily

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tuition, a large number of trade schools and a high-school. During the last ten years, 460 books have been published in Bokhard in the language of the Usbekistan Jews, who now have their own writers, poets, and dramatists.

The above paragraph provides, I think, explanation enough of why I am willing to take life in defence of the U.S.S.R. I am naturally chary of laying down my life for the sake of a catchword or a slogan. If I must risk my own life I must be quite sure that what I defend is worth the probable sacrifice. The more I learn of the building of Communism in Russia, the more I am certain it is worth that sacrifice, so that now I am willing to fight for the Franco-Soviet Pact because in defending the Soviet Union I am defending Socialism as a way of life. The Pact only arose as a result of Hitler's contemptuous rejection of an all-embracing Eastern European non-aggression and mutual assistance settlement—the projected ‘Eastern Locarno.’ This rejection by Hitler, his subsequent hysterical reviling of the U.S.S.R., and the speeches of his henchmen made the pact inevitable: but Hitler is outside the pact only because he wishes to be: he is the author of his own encirclement. Yet even now the pact explicitly includes in its terms—in the attached Protocol—that it is still open for Germany to join at any time she desires.

It is not surprising that the Soviet Union has many powerful enemies!<sup>1</sup> That fact is, indeed, a subtle compliment signifying as it does the uneasy fear which is aroused in all governments by the mere existence of a Socialist State, a State which acts as a pointer and an inspiration to the working classes of all countries and the oppressed coloured peoples of all empires. But what is important for us is that amongst the most formidable of the forces hostile to the Soviet Union to-day must be reckoned Great

<sup>1</sup>Japan has also refused a pact of non-aggression with the Soviet Union.

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Britain under her National Government. The majority of British Conservatives would only be too pleased to conclude a Western Pact with Hitler, leaving him at liberty to strike east at Russia—that so very uncomfortable reminder to the British working peoples of their own potentialities. That this has not already been done is due in the first place to fear of Liberal and Socialist public opinion, and in the second place to that powerful minority in the Conservative Party which includes—in differing degrees of conviction—Churchill, Baldwin, Duff Cooper, and Vansittart, who hold that whilst Communism constitutes a grave menace, a Germany supreme in Europe would constitute a still greater. Class interest and patriotism are here in opposition: it is an awkward choice for the Carlton Club.

No effort is made by Right-Wing circles in this country to disguise their fear and hatred of the U.S.S.R. *The Times* has denounced the Franco-Soviet pact since its inception as—‘an instrument of encirclement incompatible with the real concert of Europe as envisaged in the Covenant . . . a confession of international failure which a successful conference for the re-establishment of security would certainly render nugatory and possibly expunge’ (December 21st, 1936).

Typical expressions of British hostility to Russia are exemplified by—

‘The solidarity of Christian civilization is necessary to stem the most sinister force that has arisen not only in our lifetime but previously in European history.’<sup>1</sup>—(RT. HON. W. A. ORMSBY-GORE, speech at Manchester.)

The ‘liberal’ Mr. Lloyd George gives the correct line—

‘If the powers succeed in overthrowing Nazism . . . what would follow? Not a Socialist or Liberal regime but . . .

<sup>1</sup>Cited Dutt’s *World Politics*, p. 294.



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Communism. Surely that could not be their objective.’—  
(Speech at Barmouth, September 22nd, 1933.)

or again—

‘In a very short time the Conservative elements in this country will be looking to Germany as the bulwark against Communism. Do not let us . . . condemn Germany. We shall be welcoming Germany as our friend.’—(LLOYD GEORGE in House of Commons, November 28th, 1934.)

These are utterances which no Socialist can ignore in deciding upon his attitude towards the National Government, should that Government ever become involved in war. Unfortunately that is exactly what the leaders of the Labour Party have done. So unsophisticated are they that they see the Conservative Party, not as an ally of Fascism abroad, but as an inveterate and determined opponent. Bevin proclaims—‘We (The Trades Unions) are not going to meet Fascism by Pacifism’—and then proceeds to argue—with Citrine, Attlee and the rest of the leadership—that the cause of democracy and Collective Security can be strengthened by placing arms unconditionally into the hands of those who are betraying democracy in Spain by means of all illegal arms embargo; into the hands of those who betrayed China to the Japanese Imperialists in 1931 (‘a distant dispute with which we have no intention of associating ourselves’—Sir John Simon): into the hands of those who during the last three years have granted many hundreds of licences for the export of aeroplane engines to Germany and who have financed to a considerable degree the rearmament of that country,<sup>1</sup> who betrayed Abyssinia to Mussolini, and who immediately after winning an election on their pledge to support Abyssinia and the League, produced the Hoare-Laval plan. As Mr. Brailsford put it, ‘The

<sup>1</sup>*They Helped Hitler*, by D. N. Pritt ‘published by Labour Research Department’.

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Labour Party has bought for itself a sword: and has girded it on to the wrong loins.'

I am, I hope, a loyal member of the Labour Party, but, although the Labour Party is so pledged, I will not fight for collective security unconditionally. After the Government's double dealing over the Sino-Japanese and the Italo-Abyssinian disputes, after the unilateral and therefore illegal repudiation of part of the Versailles Treaty by the conclusion of the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, it is obvious that the Government care nothing for the principles of the Covenant. If at some future time they should earnestly seek to set the hitherto neglected League machinery in motion, then I shall know that their actions are governed not by the Covenant, but by nationalist and imperialist demands. Bearing in mind the past, I can never believe in the future that Mr. Eden or Mr. Chamberlain are ever sincere in their professions of League loyalty: the danger is that they may at some future date—they are both clever politicians—invoke the name of the League as part of their new technique of Imperialism: they may attempt to utilize the still widespread idealism in favour of the League to enlist support for their own imperialist policies. The coming imperialist war will then be presented in the guise of a League War: and the young men will be asked to vindicate the principles of the Covenant on the battlefield by the same men who have betrayed them time and time again since 1931: and the Labour Party will help lead the sheep to the shambles, a shambles made none the less terrible by the fact that the sheep bleat 'Collective Security' on the way.

But I will not fight.

It is only on the rarest occasions that the Labour leaders can be persuaded to think about the League in terms of their Socialist creed. The Labour Party to-day

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stands for the policy of collective security in its entirety and seeks ‘an all-European treaty of non-aggression, arbitration and mutual assistance.’

This is a wrong-headed policy. In the first place a system of collective security can only work when all the States within the system have a common outlook and philosophy. The question therefore should be not who to include, but who to exclude from the collective system: Germany, Italy and Japan should be excluded from the beginning. The Wilsonian myth of universality must be rejected, for a League, the constituent members of which cannot agree even approximately as to their ultimate social aim, invites ridicule and ends in stultification. It might be objected that a League of democratic powers would be equivalent merely to a thinly-veiled alliance of the pre-war type, and that its effect would be to accentuate the antagonism and the differences which divide the authoritarian from the democratic states. The answer to this is that the antagonisms and differences already exist and are known to exist: that at present the democratic States lack even the slight security which the more modest collective system might bring them: that the plan may have dangers and defects but the alternative is the present position where there exists no link, no support, between the few remaining democracies in the world. Each is liable to be struck down singly and separately by the Fascist attack with no possibility of common collective resistance.

The common defence pledge undertaken by these democratic States would be no vague pledge of mutual assistance, but an unflinching undertaking to defend each other with all their resources, military and economic. It should provide for steps leading up to a federal organization of defence, and of external policy, political and economic. The basis for such an international Peoples

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Front is already provided by the Franco-Soviet Pact. I would fight for such a system of collective security as this: but obviously there is no chance of it materializing until a Labour Government is returned to power.

The Labour Party must steel itself to resist capitalist and imperialist wars: the betrayal of 1914 must not be repeated: but, above all, it must be ready to defend the Socialist cause against the common enemy, whether on the French, the Russian, the Czecho-Slovak or the Spanish front. The Socialist vision is surely worth defending: its enemies have nothing to offer but the barbarities of mediæval racial theorists, the revival of religious and patriotic superstition accompanied by a militarism that becomes ever more hostile to any manifestation of independent thought or culture. In Russia to-day we see how illiteracy, anti-Semitism, the colour-bar—the common brutalities of our own society have been eradicated in less than a generation. In Europe, the barriers of race, nation, and class, perpetually threaten war and embitter what there is of peace. In Russia, and in Russia alone, is the concept of the ultimate international society clearly defined as the end to which all men must work.

The spectacle of Dollfuss shelling the workers' families in their homes in Vienna—of Franco's planes dropping bombs on the waiting food-queues of women in Madrid, of Mosley baiting the Jews in the East End of London and inciting to personal violence, of the American Government refusing Tom Mooney a re-trial, of American public opinion, moved by mingled fear and hatred of the negro, accepting eagerly the condemnation of the Scottsboro' Boys on perjured evidence and openly supporting the lynching and burning alive of negroes in the Southern States, the spectacle of the Central European governments segregating, persecuting and massacring their Jewish populations (over sixty Jews were beaten to death in the

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streets of Poland during 1935-1936, and not one of the murderers received a sentence in excess of five years' penal servitude), the spectacle of Japanese planes bombing the congested working-class district of Chapei with terrible effect, of Italy pouring poison gas on the helpless Abyssinians, of the exploitation for pecuniary gain of millions of the coloured peoples, of the ruthless persecution of Communists, Socialists, Liberals and Pacifists in Germany—these constitute something more than merely isolated instances of Man's delight in inflicting pain, death and mutilation. I, at any rate, take them as a symbol. Capitalist civilization is played out; its values are false; its morals barbaric.

Ideas may change but idealism still remains. For the achieving of Socialism, for the defence of the Soviet Union, for the right of the world's coloured peoples to live in dignity I will fight. And for nothing else.



*'IT IS NATURAL TO DIE FOR ONE'S COUNTRY'*

THE HON. PETER WOOD

Age 22—Educated at Eton—Now at Christ Church, Oxford—Son of Lord Halifax, Chancellor of Oxford University, Viceroy of India 1926-31, Lord President of the Council—Master of Eton and Christ Church Beagles—Author of *Oxford Lyrics* (Blackwell, 1937).





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WAR, once the pastime of the adventurous few, is to-day a catastrophe which vitally concerns the whole multitude. No longer may we mount upon a glorified Suffolk Punch and trot ponderously towards a gentlemanly combat secure in the knowledge that if we fall (in a manner reminiscent of the White Knight) we shall be raised up by kind foes—foes who will regard us as a valuable treasure to be kept in the best of condition until the time is ripe for sale.

To-day nothing can detract one jot from the beastliness of war, in the misery it involves and the disastrous aftermath, both economic and social, that it enjoins. The glamour that war once offered is gone and it stands to-day revealed as the ultimate horror in wait for mankind.

Modern civilization with its attendant satellite, modern science, enables man to kill his fellow-beings at greater distances and with as much suffering as any mediaeval torturer was ever able to devise. There can be little choice between being eaten externally by a rat or internally by a gas. Mr. Prynne may have lost his ears at the instance of the Star Chamber, but that was presumably preferable to losing both legs, an arm and eyesight at the instance of an exploding shell. Little wonder is it then that there is to-day in England no-one who, after one moment’s reflection as to what exactly the word war implies, desires to see either in his lifetime or in the lifetime of his children’s children any such calamity occur. Any man who did wish so would be an interesting exhibit and would

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attract large crowds and a certain amount of vulgar abuse at any side-show throughout the country. One might even hazard the guess that in certain towns permission would be refused to exhibit him as 'likely to have a corrupting influence on the young.' No Englishman to-day wants war.

That statement, 'no Englishman to-day wants war,' may be taken as the L.C.M. of both Pacifists and patriots. It is a point on which they both agree; the points upon which they differ being for what, or why would they or would they not fight in any war to-day.

Pacifists may be divided into two classes. First, the Pacifist who maintains that whereas war is all that is diabolical, achieves nothing, safeguards nothing, under no circumstances will he ever fight. To fight, he argues, entails suffering on both friend and foe and the ultimate goal, which when eventually reached is nothing better than a shattered wreck, is not worth the price demanded for it. A policy of non-resistance, he says, is the wise course. If men choose to resort to force to satisfy their desires, that is no excuse for resorting to force to prevent them. Two wrongs do not make a right. Far wiser it is to welcome the invader who, in return for the lack of resistance offered him, will spare all life and most property. This is a Pacifism based on rationalist and materialist grounds: it represents Good Business.

Secondly, there is the Pacifist who believes that war is morally wrong. He is not peculiar in this respect, for even a child can realize that wantonly to kill, plunder and inflict misery on thousands of fellow human beings is evil. But where this second type of Pacifist is peculiar is in his insistence that since war is so immoral nothing will induce him to take part in it.

There lived in the seventeenth century an eminent philosopher called Hobbes. Hobbes, who had weathered

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as a Royalist the storms of Civil War, returned from his exile abroad a materialist of the first degree. A materialist by nature, circumstances had made him even more so. He acknowledged no moral law and denied that Man should do anything save for purely utilitarian reasons. ‘Nature,’ he declared, ‘is a state of war,’ and provided a man can live in liberty—which he summarily defined as ‘the absence of external impediments’—he should be content. In other words, he too subscribed to the opinion that it is better to tolerate anything and to accept any ruler provided one’s life and property may be thereby secured. Hobbes was a forerunner of the first type of modern Pacifist. Coming after a period of great upheaval he held, as his counterpart holds to-day, that the ultimate goal is helpless if the means implies resistance to a power which, although different from what one may be accustomed to, provides, nevertheless, ‘the absence of external impediments.’ Both Hobbes and the first type of modern Pacifist fail to realize that the liberty of the people is dependent upon the liberty of their country, and that no people can be truly free unless they live in a country which is truly theirs and not captive to a foreign yoke.

The second opinion, that of the Pacifist who says he will go to prison rather than fight, is easy to understand, but no easier to excuse. He objects to war because it is immoral. He believes it wicked to fight and undoubtedly wicked to take the life of a fellow human being with whom he has not even a personal difference. No one would question his bravery. It is easy to say in the heat of the moment that he is a coward and disguising physical fear beneath moral principles; but on reflection the majority of people would agree that it requires very great courage to stand up in public and abide by principles that appear to be almost universally opposed. What is a little difficult to understand is this insistence upon ‘going to prison.’ It

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is here that one feels a charge of cowardice might perhaps not be inappropriate. While we may not agree with, we cannot condemn a man who has the courage to stand by his convictions, but we do condemn him when he wishes, as it were, to nurse and foster those convictions in a prison cell. Why it might be asked should he not undertake some work which involves not the killing of fellow human beings but the succouring of them? Let him help in the hospitals and with the Red Cross in the field. Let him, as has been done before, take ship and sweep the sea for mines—an operation fraught with peril for the searcher, but which entails no suffering upon the foe. He may argue, perhaps, that so much does war repel him that he would feel sullied were he to have any finger in such a filthy dish. But the foulness of war is no excuse for throwing such humanitarianism as may exist to the four winds.

The fault here, it may be argued, lies not so much with the individual as with the State itself. The State provides no means for the Pacifist to follow purely humanitarian principles. The State, he may argue, does not say, 'will you please carry this stretcher,' or 'would you mind looking for mines off Land's End?' but merely, 'fight as you're told to or go to prison.' In reality the fault lies in the understatement of his case by the individual who, instead of declaring that under no circumstances will he fight, should say instead: 'Under no circumstances will I fight, but if my country becomes involved in war I am prepared to do anything in my power for it which will not clash with my conception of moral law.' The State in a time of emergency has not opportunity to weigh up the exact position of each individual. It is for the individual to make full declaration of his position to the State.

If, however, he is indeed of the opinion that he will under no circumstances whatsoever be a party to the

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game, then he should be interned since he is a declared enemy to the State. A man who enjoys in times of peace the blessings of law and order which the State confers upon him, has a moral duty to come to the assistance of the State when *her* security is threatened. If he will not admit that obligation he should renounce his rights of citizenship and complacently allow his house to be burgled without so much as even reading the Post Office Directory instructions for calling the police. He cannot both have his cake and eat it. If he accepts the benefits the State confers upon him in time of peace he must come to her assistance in time of war. Otherwise he should depart to some land where this responsibility to the State does not exist for the simple reason that there is no State. A desert island would be a suitable place.

The Pacifist may, of course, argue that his business is not to take part in the war whether through humanitarian activities or not, but to tour the country at home, advocating peace and calling, as loudly as he is permitted to, for the cessation of hostilities. If he does this he is again a traitor to the State for the reasons already mentioned. He may not approve of the war policy, but his disapproval should take no more aggressive nature than a statement of principles and refusal to take any violent part in combat.

'I would rather see England invaded than take up arms to kill men,' was a remark that a certain Pacifist-minded gentleman once made to me. He said it partly perhaps for purpose of effect (which was considerable) but chiefly because he meant it. Peace at any price was what he believed in, and to him it mattered little who ruled so long as he himself was left in peace to continue his own life. So long as his own existence was assured he was content to see England overrun by Russians, Germans, or Australian aborigines. 'Anyone may have this country

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to call their own,' was his motto, 'provided that they rattle a sword at me and then let me live in tolerable peace.' A materialistic motto, purely utilitarian, a little tragic and very cheap.

It is an attitude which reveals above and before everything else a complete lack of patriotism. The 'intellectual' Pacifist would, of course, regard this as a blessing; for patriotism is to his mind at the worst a vice and at the best a stupidity. By being in no way tainted with the disease, he extols at one and the same time both his intellect and his virtue. He does, however, lose so many of the beautiful things of life, amongst them love of the country that is his by birth. A love springing not from pride in being an Englishman which is a false pride since, unlike the lines in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, it is *not* 'greatly to his credit that he is an Englishman' for his nationality is a blessing for which he should thank God rather than Man, but from pride in the country to which he belongs.

Let the Pacifist cast his mind back over the history of his country. He may see her in an ever-passing panorama. At first but a small smudge in the corner of the world map; an insignificant island. Then he may see her emerging gradually from her chrysalis, become linked with the other countries of the world; growing both physically and mentally, and evolving piece by piece a system of government that has been the envy of foreign states which have succumbed in turn to storms which upon the British rock have broken in clouds of flying spray. He may see an England moving rapidly to the front aided by men such as Drake and Raleigh, Hawkins and Greville who cared little what became of them as long as England flourished. Then was the time that love of country first appeared in all its sincerity, all its fervour and passion. When Shakespeare put into the mouth of old John of Gaunt the famous lines:

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‘This royal throne of kings, this scepter’d isle,  
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,  
This other Eden, demi-paradise;  
This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war;  
This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Or as a moat defensive to a house,  
Against the envy of less happier lands;  
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England. . . .’

he was voicing the spirit of all Englishmen of that time; and it is a spirit which the Pacifist, unmoved by the panorama history reveals to him, lacks altogether to-day. He has no sense of tradition and the dignity and sacredness of the land he has inherited. Selfishness would seem to be the keynote of his policy; for he desires all safety for himself and the barest minimum for his country.

That country has no especial appeal for him. ‘Parts of it are pretty, parts of it are ugly. In places the traffic is bad, in other places cares are almost unknown. The trees above Henley look lovely in autumn; there is something delightful about the moors in summer’—it is all a prosaic attachment to purely exterior values. The materialist-minded Pacifist appears to have no roots in the land and it is for this reason that he is never happy in those parts of England which are still little changed from the days when the ground echoed to the tramp of the marching legions and the silence of the long dark nights was broken only by a sentry’s footsteps as he paced the Great Wall staring north at the camp fires of the Picts.

So many—and this is a reassuring thought to all those who are of the opinion that any young man to-day is of necessity opposed to war in any circumstances—think when they think of England (which they do only at odd

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moments and for a reason that is often unfathomable) of all those things which were so well described by Rupert Brooke in his essay on the Declaration of War, 1914. Of their homes and the country round them; of the places they have lived in and learned to love as part of themselves. It is for that reason that when I think of the Yorkshire Wolds, that long stretch of hills that joins the moors on the north to the Humber on the south, and which, rising from the vale of York, leads away to the sea, I can realize that we can never cut ourselves away from our country and stand detached observers of it, for we are part of it and it of us.

Since the day when Tostig and Hardrada marched with their warriors to death at Stamford Bridge, a little village some eight miles from York, some five or six from the foot of the wolds, the wolds have changed but little. The villages are still tucked away in the dale bottoms, as though even to-day they sought to hide from a sudden Danish raid. Tumuli still mark the places where Danish leaders lie; their lives of sea-faring, loot and pillage, came to rest in the chalky soil of the land they spoiled. They lie within hearing of the sea they loved; damped by a cold sea-fret; their dirge sung by the seagulls sheltering from the storm; their resting-place marked by an earthen cairn and a few trees.

Bleak and grey are the wolds in winter and there comes from the sea a mist which is wetter than rain. Farms are few and far between. Spring is at first spring in name only, for cold winds and icy showers persist and the early lambs suffer terribly. Huddled against their mothers they bleat piteously against the cold, but none heeds them. Often their bleating grows fainter and fainter, until all that is left is a white heap on a flinty field, while an old ewe stands sentry over something which was once hers but which she can now no longer understand. Finally she



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forsakes it. Such is the beginning of spring. Towards the end the wolds begin to soften. All that was brown is now green. The wolds melt and become more human, for it is in summer only that they appeal to the stranger. In winter they repel him: then are they friendly only to their own people. But in the summer months they seem to sleep and forget all feuds. They are content to doze in the sun until the noises of summer give way to those of autumn—the clatter of the binder; the whirr of the covey off the stubble. Until all is garnered, all is stored and the sound of the horn is heard once again in the land.

‘Each man kills the thing he loves,’ wrote Oscar Wilde, and words can do but little to make live those parts of England which we hold so dear. For speech is limited, while the country is wild. Words are insufficient while the country is boundless. No mere sentences can describe what it is that inspired that love which culminates in the lines of Henley:

‘Ever the faith endures,  
England, my England.  
Take us and break us we are yours,  
England, my own.’

They are lines which have been scoffed at by many who fail to distinguish between sentiment and sentimentality; but they are lines which do express, as well as any words can, a little of the love which England can inspire and something of the sacrifice which she cannot only demand, but also receive.

There are people who would take exception to the last few words of that last paragraph; for they would doubt whether England would receive anything from the ‘youth of to-day.’ Such people have in mind the Oxford Union motion about ‘King and Country.’ It is the exception rather than the rule for the Oxford Union to represent the

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opinion of the average Oxford undergraduate. It might just as well be argued that because certain members of the University work eight hours a day, all do, or that because certain undergraduates never visit the hair-dresser's save when their supply of lip-stick requires renewal, all undergraduates are addicted to cosmetics. The Union is no more representative of Oxford opinion than is the O.U.D.S. or the Brasenose J.C.R.; but by clever publicity and the encouragement of some sections of the popular press, to whom the name Oxford is invariably 'news,' the Union has succeeded in creating *outside* Oxford the impression that it speaks with the voice of every Oxford undergraduate. Hence the horror against the 'youth of to-day' that swept through the regimental messes from Shorncliffe to Secunderabad, sending the Khitmagars scuttling for a 'chota-peg' whilst the Mem-sahibs set the punkahs going in a frantic effort to soothe the Colonel Sahib's wrath.

There are a very great number of people at Oxford to-day who would fight for 'King and Country,' and it is a mistake to assume that because they are not ceaselessly chanting their Creed of War (as is the custom of all those who hold contrary views) people with such opinions do not exist. They do not say much about their opinions for the simple reason that they do not consider their opinions so extraordinary as to warrant airing in public. It is to them a natural thing that they should be prepared to die for their country, and they cannot therefore see the object in announcing to the world what they regard as an ordinary fact of life. They do not wish to fight, for they are under no illusions as to what modern warfare entails. They are no visionaries dreaming of war as something glorious and ennobling. They realize only too well its true character; but are none the less prepared, if a sacrifice is called for, to make that sacrifice purely and

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simply because their love for their country is greater than, and transcends by far, their love for themselves.

If, then, I were to be asked for what would I fight, I think I would reply, praying in my heart of hearts that the situation would never arise, in the words of a certain song which runs:

‘For home and kinsfolk, for old comrades,  
For King and Country, and for thee.’



*'THE HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE'*

EDITH SHAWCROSS

Age 24—Educated at Headington School and St. Hilda's College, Oxford—Obtained a B.A. Degree in the Honour School of Botany in 1935—Lawn Tennis Blue, 1935—Ex-Editress of *Women's News* and Ex-Assistant Editor of the *Isis* 1935-1936—Ex-Secretary of the O.U. Imperial Club—Contributor to *Be Still and Know* (Michael Joseph).



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MANY parts of the country are becoming spoilt by the drone of the aeroplane. It is only rarely that one is free from this menace if one lives in an afflicted area. As I write I can hear a hum in the distance which grows steadily louder—and I wonder whether the time will come when these sounds will no longer be regarded as friendly.

To most of my contemporaries the last war was no more than a dream. I myself was five years old when it ended. Yet there must be many who cannot hear the sound of an aeroplane without remembering the horrors of air raids upon London—has time dulled their memories?

For the remarkable fact seems to be that it is the young—and especially young women—who are the most eager for peace. In a letter to the Press in October, 1934, the late Canon Sheppard wrote: ‘Up to now the peace movement has received its main support from women, but it seems high time that men should throw their weight into the scales against war.’

One would have thought that those with practical experience of the last Armageddon would be determined to the point of any sacrifice that another war should not occur. But what do we find? In the last ten years, the statesmen of the world have gradually repudiated their idealism. From saying ‘There must never be another war,’ they progressed to ‘If there is another war,’ while now the formula has changed to ‘When the next war comes . . .’

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As we all know, one cause of the trouble lies in the fact that the greater part of the war generation was wiped out. Those who should by now have taken over the reins of the country lie buried deep—cut off in their prime so that war should be ended for ever. Was it all in vain?

I was astonished to see a fine example of a pacifist film, with this title, when I visited the cinema about a week ago. It pointed out clearly the useless sacrifice involved by the war and the failure of the present League of Nations to establish peace through collective security. After the deluge of militarist propaganda conveying the idea that more armaments mean peace, such a film was doubly welcome.

It is natural, with so much war propaganda in the air, that youth should be restless and unsatisfied. The old know, although they will seldom admit it, that their sacrifice will be mainly vicarious, but the young have an uneasy feeling that the day when they will become fresh cannon-, bomb- and gas-fodder is not far away, in spite of the pacts, pledges and promises of the politicians, in spite of the million dead.

Such an attitude is not purely selfish. Although November 11th of each year is a perpetual reminder of how the world has treated those who survived, youth would be prepared to fight if it felt that another war would accomplish anything of the slightest use. It is because war has been so successfully debunked that the young have become gun shy; and are preoccupied with the question: 'In the event of another war, would we fight?'

For the purposes of this essay the question should be 'Would women fight?' and I should make it clear that I am speaking of the women of my own generation, i.e., those under thirty. Although many men will hold up their hands in horror at the idea, such a possibility must not be excluded. We have been told too often that in the



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next war 'the only defence will be in attack' and that 'the safest place will be the front-line trenches'; men must realize from the example of Spain and China that there can be no romantic nonsense about protecting the women and children.

Many women still fail to realize the extent to which another war would envelop them. Women are now fighting alongside men in Spain and are being trained as soldiers in Russia. Although it seems inconceivable that they might be *forced* to fight, if the enemy is utilizing every able-bodied person we shall either be forced to do likewise or resign ourselves to the handicap. But is it so inconceivable? I hope I will be forgiven if I quote a passage from the late Canon 'Dick' Sheppard's *We Say 'No.'*

'Martha Jane Graber, a nurse, born in Alsace Lorraine, applied to an American court for the rights and privileges of citizenship of the United States. She was asked if she was willing to serve the country in time of war. She replied that she would do so in keeping with the spirit of her profession—she was a nurse. That reply was not considered satisfactory.

"Suppose your country saw fit to demand your service in the army in time of war as a combatant, to take part in the war; explain what you would do under the circumstances," she was asked.

"I would go to the front in my profession," replied Miss Graber. . . .

"That doesn't answer the question: Are you willing to fight for the United States if need be? You understand what is meant by fighting, Miss Graber; I mean to take up arms in defence of the United States if necessary."

"I cannot kill, but I would be willing to give my life."

"Do I understand that you mean that you are unwilling to fight for the United States?"

"Do you mean by 'fighting,' killing?"

"I do if necessary. Such is war, Miss Graber" . . .

"I conscientiously could not do that."

'Miss Graber's application for citizenship was rejected.'

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This example serves to illustrate the way in which we are becoming de-civilized. Sensibilities have become coarsened; the breakdown of morals has been followed by a breakdown of chivalry. The emancipation of women has been largely responsible; as with every revolutionary movement, women at first went too far. One cannot expect a man to regard a woman with the same chivalry when she fights for her bread alongside him; he may admire her more, but he comes to regard her as a comrade. This is not to say that this attitude has not its good points; it leads to mutual companionship and discussion impossible under the old order, and in many cases the best of both the old and the new attitudes may be combined.

But women must realize that they cannot have men's privileges without being prepared to suffer hardships, and that in the case of war they will not be exempted from duty. Their participation in all types of war work will no longer be voluntary, although I cannot believe that there will be military conscription for women in this country.

Apart from such considerations, women are as cognisant as men of the ultimate disaster which another war would bring, and many are more determined to avoid it. Men may be led astray by the propaganda of the Hitlers and Mussolinis who declare that: 'By war alone can nations fulfil their destiny and secure justice,' or that 'War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it'; but women, with a more fundamental instinct of self-preservation, realize that although these high-sounding phrases may have been true in the days when battles were waged by the rules of chivalry and fair play, they are no longer true to-day. Rightly or wrongly, many are refusing to bear children into such an anxious

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world. It is easy to condemn this attitude as selfish; many are making a real sacrifice of their interests for those of their unborn children.

There is, indeed, much to be said for it. Pacifism is more likely to become a reality for this nation if the birth rate continues to fall, for we would not fight unless we had every anticipation of winning, and we could not win if we had not the men to fight. However, I do not feel that it is the right solution, and I agree with the young married woman who, in an article in the series ‘The Voice of Under Thirty,’ published in the *Spectator* on November 12th, 1937, says: ‘I am content . . . to have the two children we both want and serve them with all I have,’ and who, speaking ‘for a bewildered and unheroic woman of 25 . . . believes that if she herself can live an ordered life and be a true wife and wise mother, she will have made some contribution to the solution of vast problems.’

As far as she goes she expresses the attitude towards life of a vast number of women to-day—but does she go far enough? It is only by making the wish for peace the universal will for peace, that peace will be secured. If every woman pacifist could convince only one ardent militarist of the futility of war, then the peace movement would be doubly strong and the supporters of the Duff Cooper and Yeats-Brown type of mentality would be rendered largely innocuous.

It is a platitude that one must have deep feelings on a subject before one can convince others. It is the apathy of those with the sincerest convictions that is leading us away from peace. Many young people of both sexes have become so weary of the perpetual talk of war, that they have adopted the policy of the proverbial ostrich and refused to think of the matter at all. They are right in that perpetual discussion of an occurrence which you fear, and hope will never be precipitated, emphasizes the fact

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that it may be realized at any moment. As in the story of the woman who was always wailing that she would have a son who would go down into the cellar to draw wine and be killed by the hatchet on the wall falling on his head, there is a great deal of talk, but little effort to remove the hatchet. As we know, the popular Press are the worst offenders—especially those sections which, by making the most of international differences and seizing all such news as a ‘story,’ increase the war risk by jeopardizing international relationships.

Although the assumption that another war is on the way makes war more likely, refusal to think about the problem at all gives rise to loss of the wish to think and finally the loss of all power to think clearly. I think it is a fair generalization that the majority of women find more difficulty than men in getting to the root of a problem and in seeing facts in their right perspective. It is, therefore, all the more essential that they should make the effort. Acquiescence in any régime that ‘leaves one in peace’ has made possible Fascism, which does not. We have seen how, under Nazism, woman’s position has become that of a *hausfrau* for whom domesticity is the sole ideal, and the production of as many children as possible the sole justification for her existence in the eyes of the State. Intelligent women are realizing more and more that whatever the outcome of another war, the country would be in such a state of chaos, that some form of military dictatorship would be essential to restore any semblance of order. Militarists will pooh-pooh this idea as nonsense, but the extent to which the freedom of citizens and of the Press was curtailed during the last war is only a small indication of the control which will be necessary in the next. One cannot expect the populace to applaud the Government if 2,000 bombs are dropped on London in one hour, as was done recently on Madrid.

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There is no need for me to enlarge on this point; it has been fully dealt with by others.

But much of the apathy one finds to-day is not the result of laziness. Often it is just the opposite. Unable to bear contemplating the squalid and miserable conditions under which the unemployed are often forced to live, unable to bear the uncertainty of the international situation, many sensitive women cultivate that hardness and cynicism so deplored by the older generation, as a cloak to hide their real feelings. Having been taught to think honestly, they find it impossible to care for anything without being hurt too much.

Their case is well put by a young woman graduate of Oxford, in the sixth article in the *Spectator*, ‘Under Thirty’ series, published on November 19th, 1937. She wrote:

‘It is almost worse to value and care for anything and to see a hundred million people who cannot or do not do so too, than to value nothing at all. It is almost worse to have something one wishes to preserve and to see the likelihood of its preservation growing smaller day by day, than to be entirely without interest in anything. . . .

‘The problem seems to be insoluble. Either you have to face the fact that there are usually people being massacred daily in some part of the world, and that it will soon be the turn of yourself and your friends, in which case it seems pointless to continue doing anything. Or you have got deliberately to ignore the squalor and tragedy of most aspects of life and concentrate irresponsibly on your own pleasures. . . . If only one could be as realistic and as radically honest as one knows one ought to be and at the same time remain happy and anxious to live, what appears to me the major problem of life would be solved. . . . But failing this I do not see that there is any possible alternative to cynicism and *accidie*.’

Although one cannot agree with the attitude that prompts the remark ‘it seems pointless to continue doing

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anything,' one can sympathize with it as a form of escapism from the nightmare which must oppress all women of any sensibility.

The old cannot logically blame the young for their disillusionment. Having exposed to them the sham of modern civilization, they refuse to do anything substantial about it while keeping the reins of power themselves. Any enthusiasm youth may have grows cold in the consciousness of its own impotence. As the writer of the 'Under Thirty' article of November 12th so rightly says: 'Love of security is the main preoccupation of the old and its compensating emotion is fear. A world directed by the aged is a world ruled by fear, and that is the kind of world we live in to-day. To us who are under thirty it seems a world without enterprise, without courage, without love; and those are the very things within our power to offer it.' Cynicism, after all, is only warped enthusiasm; it will be the world's great tragedy if, when the youth of to-day are allowed a voice, they have nothing left to give.

. . . . .

Firstly, does women's attitude towards fighting differ in any way from that of men? Except that a larger percentage are at any rate theoretically Pacifist, if you were to ask a million women whether they would fight in the event of a change of sex, you could logically expect the variety of answers which would be given by an exactly similar group of young men. Communism, Socialism, Fascism and the hundreds of attendant 'isms'—all would have their champions, either in a civil or a national war. Typical of the militant attitude is the view expressed by a young woman of nineteen in the *Spectator*, 'Under Thirty' series of December 3rd, 1937. She says: 'As for war, surely it is better to fight and die for freedom, and justice, and truth—imperfect though our ideas of them

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are, and far more imperfect our practice of them—than to live the political chattels of some dictator or impersonal State.'

Secondly, would women's attitude be the same if women volunteers were welcomed, or in the event of a general mobilization of both sexes? Some ardent supporters of this party or that might conceivably be expected to hold back from a deep-rooted hatred of killing; it is to be hoped that women would not become completely defeminized. But remembering how our mothers were deceived by the ballyhoo and flag-wagging into glorying in their vicarious sacrifice, and how bloodthirsty many of them became when their lives were touched by tragedy, there is no knowing to what pitch of frenzy women's emotions might not be raised. We all know how easily an aggressive war can be made to seem defensive. The conquest of Abyssinia was a righteous war to the Italian people; Japanese propagandists are busy telling the masses that the Chinese are the aggressors in the present campaign. Although the popular slogan 'For King and Country' is becoming a little tattered, those in command are doing their best to assure the nation that the young are ready to fight.

On Monday, October 25th, 1937, the *Oxford Mail*, in a leading article entitled 'Youth is For Peace,' stated:

'Field-Marshal Sir Cyril Deverell has told a gathering of Territorials that if the youth of Britain could read the writing on the wall there would be no gaps in the Territorial Army. This is not the whole truth by any means.

'Glasgow University students by an overwhelming vote have elected Canon Dick Sheppard, the pacifist leader, to be their Lord Rector. They preferred him to Mr. Winston Churchill, who might have been the Field-Marshal's first choice. . . . Field-m Marshals and politicians will be wise to take note of these increasing signs of

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youthful anxiety to repudiate the warlike philosophy.'

But theoretical pacifism is not enough, for under the stress of practical issues it is apt to give way. Those who sneer at peace movements and peace plebiscites have as their greatest handle the brutalizing effect that war has on a nation. The destructive impulse is an ineradicable component of man's nature; once roused, it masters him. Vittorio Mussolini finds bombing the Abyssinians 'most entertaining.'

Many men and women would be engulfed in another war because they are not strong enough to combat the rising flood of popular feeling. I have talked with many young women who, while agreeing with all the arguments for pacifism, yet say: 'I do not believe another war would accomplish anything, but if one came I know I should go if I were a man, or if there was mobilization of women. After all, what is the use of one person refusing to fight?' It is precisely this attitude which helps to make war possible, together with the existence of the type of young woman who regards peace as 'rather dull,' while war is 'so romantic.' According to the late Canon Sheppard, she was still to be found in 1934, and no doubt expects that cheering the nation's heroes would be her allotted part in another war. Popular songs of the type, 'Everybody Loves a Soldier,' 'Round the Marble Arch,' etc., tend to keep this attitude alive.

Apart from those women who would fight because 'What is the use of one person refusing to fight?' what of the masses who are occupied in wresting a living for their families upon the barest minimum? Up till now I have been considering those women with leisure to think who are sufficiently articulate to express themselves. Although we have progressed to a higher general standard of education, women whose serious concern is where the next meal is coming from, cannot be expected to have



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much time for other considerations. Seeing how they have endured the Government’s unemployment policy, it is quite possible that they would welcome a war, in that it would give a fillip to the munitions industry and, therefore, a greater chance of employment. When conditions are impossible, any change is better than none. It should not be difficult, under these circumstances, to convince them that a victorious war would bring a solution to their troubles; they would doubtless be persuaded by Government propaganda to serve their country as nobly in time of war as they are doing uncomplainingly in this era of peace and prosperity. And if those with more advantages can be convinced that ‘might is right,’ what hope is there that the masses would resist the false appeal?

. . . . .

A fundamental and most important difference between the attitude of the two sexes towards war is due to the incapacity of many women to view an issue other than in terms of personality. There is enough truth in this generalization to make it applicable here. An example will illustrate what I mean. Imagine a woman pacifist, married to a man who is convinced that in the event of another war it would be his duty to fight. They have a small child aged four or five. Think of the conflicting loyalties in that woman’s mind—husband versus child and principles, instinct versus instinct plus reason. Her mind would jump from one to the other like a see-saw, and who can say whether she would decide to stay with her child or fight at her husband’s side (assuming, of course, that women may be called upon to fight). Subtract the child from one side of the hypothetical equation and the plank would be weighed down in the husband’s favour.

The husband, with his fixed convictions, will see his duty clearly, to ‘protect’ his wife and child by fighting

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for them; for, in adopting this attitude, he will either be blind to the realities of what may happen to them in his absence, or he may realize their danger but consider that his duty to the State comes first. But for the normal married woman, the personal question must loom largest.

Let me give a true example in support of the 'personal' theory. A friend of mine was recently killed fighting in Spain, together with her fiancé. Is it to be imagined that she would have gone out to Spain on account of her principles, if he had stayed behind? If I were given this as a purely hypothetical case I would give the odds as 100 to 1 against, but in this instance I happen to know that my friend only went because she could not bear to be left behind.

It is natural that women should have to face this dilemma for—in spite of all that the emancipationists have to say—the quotation ending, ' 'Tis woman's whole existence,' is still substantially true to-day. Do not think that I am condoning this fact. A woman with no outside interests is a menace to the home and a nuisance to her husband. She either makes his life miserable, or concentrates on her children to such an extent that they are never allowed to grow up and become self-reliant. Sometimes they are even inhibited from making normal marriages. The proverbial mother-in-law, whose interest in her son's winter underwear persists until he is well past fifty. Women's capacity for concentration is admirable, but wrongly directed it tends to develop into an obsession of some form or other.

While such a condition exists, it must be allowed for as a component in women's psychology. It was prevalent enough in the last generation, though there are signs that, in the widening of all spheres of activity to accommodate women, the happy medium between selflessness and

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selfishness is fast being reached, and women are concentrating upon home and other interests to the exclusion of neither. When no other interests are available, selflessness in the home often degenerates into doormattishness, or becomes a cloak for petty tyranny.

These generalizations are, of course, only applicable to those with personal ties, but that is the vast majority. For those who cavil, I had better say now that I have left the masculine type of woman out of this discussion, her reactions would presumably differ little from those of men.

It is the personal element influencing women's reactions which makes many so hopeless for the future. Women do not want a war in which their husbands and children are blown to pieces; that is their first concern. Seeing no hope of avoiding one, many resort to that fatalism which is so marked a feature of the *Spectator* article I have quoted. Yet, if such an attitude becomes general, war will be inevitable.

. . . . .

As the other contributors to this series are expressing their personal reactions to the question 'Would I Fight?', a brief exposition of my own opinion will not be out of place in this essay.

Firstly, I do not want it to be imagined that, when I attack the older generation, I do not recognize that many have given up their lives working for peace. That would be as absurd as to whitewash those who have not. None could have worked harder than the late 'Dick' Sheppard, Sir Norman Angell or Viscount Cecil of Chelwood—to take the first three names which occur to me. But even they cannot carry enough weight with governments. To quote from the *News-Chronicle* of November 20th, 1937: 'Lord Ponsonby told a Chelsea Peace Pledge Union meeting last night that when he took 140,000 pacifist signatures to Downing Street, Lord Baldwin regarded him as an

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amiable lunatic. I can only say that I do not think Lord Baldwin would have been so likely to regard pacifism as lunacy if he had been forced to sign Mr. A. A. Milne's Suicide Pact. Lord Ponsonby continued: 'It was a mad-man, I notice, at the Cenotaph the other day, who said: "Stop this hypocrisy. You are preparing for another war."' He was then bundled off to the lunatic asylum. . . . Lord Ponsonby said that . . . all that the Government regulations were doing was to instil people with the feeling that another war was expected. That alone would make another war possible.'

It surely is an outrage if Stanley Storey has been certified as insane for merely saying what he thought, first in the House of Commons at the beginning of last year and secondly at the Cenotaph. He can, however, be condemned for allowing his feelings to run away with him in the wrong place, since social tact is, of course, more important than a spontaneous reaction against war preparation and humbug.

*The Times* of November 12th loftily dismissed the incident by stating that: 'The man was obviously suffering from delusions,' but to many of us these 'delusions' seemed remarkably sensible. I am glad to see that the matter has not been allowed to rest. A letter in the *News-Chronicle* of November 19th states: 'That a man can be pushed into an asylum for such an act and for interrupting the proceedings in the House of Commons, savours of Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy rather than "free" England.' It is to be hoped that by the time this book appears, a proper inquiry will have been made into the matter.

But in spite of the sincere work of some in the cause of peace, it is impossible to condone the intolerant attitude of many of the older generation. It seems that England is no longer 'free,' when one can cite the disgraceful incident of the dismissal of two young men by a firm of

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Lloyd's underwriters 'because they wore white Peace Pledge Union poppies as well as red Haig poppies in the office on Armistice Day.' One of them is a Pacifist through religious convictions; both their fathers fought in the Great War.

A leading article in the *News-Chronicle* of November 23rd stated:

'Pacifism—whatever others may think of it—is a conviction sincerely and legitimately held by many people. None of us has the right to say to another man that he may not be a Pacifist.' But it is depressing to realize how many so-called intelligent people consider it no paradox to profess a love of peace while condemning Pacifism.

My second point is that everyone should realize that the root of the trouble is that circumstances have changed while man's nature has not. I know that this is not a new point, but it bears repeating. It is remarkable the number of people one meets who either cannot, or will not, realize it. It has been said that the growth of materialism is forcing us back to barbarism; it is a debatable question whether we have ever ceased being barbaric.

War is no longer advantageous, yet what can we put in its place? War produces a less workable type of society, and its worst effects are manifested in time of peace. The economic and the war problem are inextricably linked. While most of a nation's resources are being diverted into the manufacture of useless war material, the economic problem cannot be solved. On the other hand, it is impossible to get rid of the risk of war under present conditions, without getting rid of unemployment. The danger which the Fascist States present to the world is that their peoples must be kept enthusiastic. If the economic situation becomes grave and the people restless, a Dictator will in all probability risk war in order to prevent revolution. In fact, a vicious circle.

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But there are glimmerings of hope. One is the fact that the League of Nations ever came into existence. Although up to now it has 'failed,' it has never been given any chance to succeed. Another is the fact that England will on no account fight an aggressive war, although cynics will rightly say that this is only because she has got what she wants. In this context there are hopeful signs that we are growing more sympathetic towards Germany's demands for colonies. Lord Samuel's appeal to Britain to rid herself of the possibility of being accused of hypocrisy, must not be in vain. He stated that: 'A settlement, in which Great Britain, France and Germany are the principal parties, is the primary need of the world.' We share the responsibility with France, and to some extent with America, that twenty years ago we could have laid the foundations for a lasting peace in Europe—before Nazism, before Fascism. We did not. The return of Germany's colonies would be a sop to her pride and should considerably ease the situation.

One can almost hear the cry: 'Suppose it does not?' Suppose that Italy or Germany become completely out of hand and attack us? Then what of the ultimate question 'Would I fight?'

I hope and believe that in my case the answer would be 'No,' and that no personal considerations would outweigh my decision. I sincerely believe that there is nothing which can justify another war. I am a patriot in that I love my country, but that love does not imply loss of all critical faculty, or hatred of other countries.

I believe that our hope lies in making the League of Nations an effective power in the world, or in complete disarmament. If the former proves impossible, the latter is preferable to war. For any permanent solution of the economic problem the latter must come eventually, and if through the achieving of the former, then so much the

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better for us all. The Fascist countries rely upon our defending ourselves; if we refused to do so, half the incentive to attack us would be gone. And they would look very stupid if they continued to maintain their armaments while we had none. World economic conditions would be improved, and two of the chief causes of war—fear and economic stress—would be removed for ever. An Utopian dream? Not if we are prepared to take risks.

For those who say: ‘What of the British Empire?’ I reply that I do not consider that the British Empire is worth the risk of another war. I would rather that we were a small country like Denmark or Norway who do not fear war and who have a comparatively small unemployment problem, primarily because they do not join in the armaments race. The problem of how to dispose of the British Empire before it is too late has been explained by Bertrand Russell in *Which Way to Peace?*

If I could see any possible way in which a war would benefit humanity, I would be willing to fight. If I could believe that by fighting for (ay) Socialism, the lot of the millions existing below the poverty line in this and other countries would be substantially improved, I would be prepared to take up arms in either a civil or national war. But it has been proved conclusively by Mr. Russell and others that war no longer pays as a practical policy, quite apart from the Christian issue, and that the result of another war would be some form of military Fascism. Even those critics who disliked Mr. Russell’s views were unable to disprove his conclusions.

I cannot condone the attitude of the Churches towards war. When the Archbishop of York makes the statement: ‘It can be a Christian Duty to Kill,’ as he did in February, 1937, at the Church Assembly, I feel that it is impossible to correlate Church teaching with Christ’s beliefs. He went

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on to say that 'In a Christian world, war would not occur, but we are not in that position.' The Church has been saying this for nineteen hundred years, but the Christian world is no nearer. The only man who tried to practise as he preached made an impression that will never be forgotten; by his non-resistance he eventually won the allegiance of the aggressor. If Christ's methods were put into practice by a whole nation they would not be successful at first, but I am convinced that they would triumph in the end. At all events they have never yet been tried.

The Archbishop may feel that the British Empire represents an ideal which justifies the slaughter of other peoples, but he should state his views on the ethics of killing as a practical citizen, and not in the name of Christianity. Since the keynote of Christianity is sacrifice, and since its founder chose to die rather than fight for his ideals, his followers should not contradict him and call upon Christians to betray the principles of their Master. This inconsistency seems to my generation one of the greatest stumbling-blocks in the way of belief in orthodoxy, and is one of the reasons why the Church is so out of touch with the young.

The urgent task of the moment is to impress upon every individual that, as Sir Norman Angell says, it is the man and woman in the street who are really responsible for war, through acquiescing in policies which are incompatible with peace without realizing that they are incompatible. I shall be asked, what would I have them do? This is my answer.

Cease following their instincts at the command of a minority and then mistaking these instincts for opinions. Reason out the situation for themselves with the help of a comprehensive book on peace, by someone other than a politician with an axe to grind. If convinced that peace is



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the only sane policy, support a peace movement such as the Peace Pledge Union. If overburdened with leisure, enlist actively in a peace movement or in the service of the unemployed. Argue for disarmament or collective security, whichever seems to them to hold the most promise of peace. But if all they can do is to convince one other that peace must be secured *at any sacrifice*, they will not have lived in vain.

And what of the women in this scheme? Theirs is the ultimate responsibility, for they have a special task. If they will bring up their children to hate war as they would hate killing their own parents, it may one day truly be said:

‘The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world.’



‘WAR IS NOT *IGNOBLE*’

PRINCE ALEXANDER OBOLENSKY

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**N**OT so very long ago the Oxford Union passed a resolution not to fight for King or Country. In their customary manner the sensational Press seized upon this resolution and by exaggeration and misrepresentation gave it headlines. The whole of the Senior University was labelled with the White Feather because some few curios had made the startling discovery that war was a bad thing and that they would not fight under any circumstances. How pleased this motley crew must have felt when their resolution was taken to represent the opinion of the whole University. They had seen the light; they had solved the problem for their less intellectual fellow-undergraduates; to the Union was attributed the intellectual leadership of Oxford. At least so it seemed to the outside world, but the three thousand undergraduates outside the Union received the great news with sardonic smiles and made no protest.

After all, it was only the Union, and nobody takes any notice of it, apart from Union members—for the most part an odd bevy of nondescripts who appear to take no particular interest in their work, in games, in the O.T.C. or the Air Squadron, nor in the numerous art, literary and dramatic societies to which spare-time energy can be devoted—presumably up at Oxford to absorb a little learning and culture. These Union members attempt to overcome their apparent inferiority complex by assuming a superiority complex, in prattle. Gone are the days when the Union produced great orators, for the age of oratory is dead. There is no time for it. The Union has become the

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asylum for those who are frustrated, who find other branches of university life empty and who, having become members, evade their non-descriptiveness by being classed as 'Union.'

But the Union type is not typically Oxford. For that matter the 'typical Oxford man' is just as non-existent as the 'average man,' for the University is composed of all kinds and conditions of men. Perhaps this is what makes Oxford what it is, and justifies the existence of the Union.

For obvious reasons I have been criticized as being a most unrepresentative member of Alma Mater and hence I can only claim that my answer to 'Would I Fight?' is a purely personal exposition of my own views on the subject. I can only hope that in its substance it is a more acceptable solution than that which the equally immature intellect of the Union was presumptive enough to put forward for all of us. To begin with, I am firmly convinced that in the event of war breaking out, a vast majority of the country would respond to the call of King and Country. During the Great War a vast sum of money was spent on Anti-German propaganda; even vaster sums would be spent for the next, and many members of the Union would be influenced by the propaganda which acts so effectively in times of national crisis, when cold abstract intellect gives way to shared emotions, and collective symbols create common muscular and glandular responses. In spite of a reserved and matter-of-fact exterior, the Englishman is probably more emotional than the Latin or the Slav, though, of course, he will never admit it, nor ever relax his efforts to hide it. In England there is more respect for the dead, for solemn occasions, for the Monarchy, for moral obligations and even for Sundays, than in any other country I have visited. It is because of the Englishman's emotionalism that his patriotism is unequalled; his country means so much more than self that he will

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willingly die for it and consider his life well spent. For him, emotion is stronger than reason, though they often join forces in determining the action.

The horrors of the past war have been amply depicted to us through the medium of the cinema screen and war-time photographs: the infinitely more terrible horrors of future war—not only for those fighting but for civilian populations—have been widely stressed. These prophets would have us believe that the art of war no longer exists, that it is just some diabolical monstrosity which justifies wholesale slaughter in slogans and symbols of patriotic sacrifice. No longer is war something inspiring and glorious, worthy of the poet’s highest praise. It was all very well (they say) when the knight donned his armour and sallied forth armed with lance and shield; but to-day millions will perish like cattle. To most of us war with cannon-balls bouncing along the earth’s surface provides a picturesque and heroic scene, but no doubt the Pacifists of those days considered this body-line attack as something dastardly, unsporting, and quite out of keeping with the best traditions of the game. Pacifists in the olden days must have damned the vile varlet who invented the bow and arrow, thereby exposing the noble knight to the liability of incapacitation before he had the chance to demonstrate his skill and valour. Times change. Human beings are responsible for the changes, and while we may agree with the nineteenth-century French general, who said that war is magnificent only if viewed from afar, we must try to keep pace with these alterations. Developments in methods of warfare are really no different from developments in the taste and appreciation of art, literature, architecture and so forth. Some may appreciate modern painting, music, books, and find themselves incapable of appreciating modern flats, factories and furniture. Progress may be an illusion, but apparently we

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believe in it and so must face it and make the best of it. Otherwise we are anachronisms and cowards.

No sane person wants another war. Its potentialities deter even the most pugnacious. But there comes a time when we must fight, however repulsive the idea may seem. Human nature is such that we can still appreciate some of the finer and more glorious aspects of wartime. To me there is something serenely majestic and noble about the sight of a battleship, a squadron of aeroplanes or a well-trained battalion on parade—all create an impression of might, efficiency and a kind of masculine beauty. They are collective symbols of might. Chances for individual prowess in the arts of war may have greatly diminished, since mass destruction slays coward and lion-hearted at one fell swoop, but the exploits of individual soldiers, sailors and airmen during the Great War are sufficient to show that even in the twentieth-century warfare there is something worthy of the poet's pen. I am not trying to propound that we should love war. I deny that it is ignoble.

The Pacifist tells the mass that they are merely cannon-fodder, each man an insignificant unit in a destructive, murderous machine which is utilizing him for the benefit of the State. From an upturned soap-box nearby, the Communist proclaims that each man is an insignificant unit in some industry or factory and that the capitalist is exploiting him. In peace-time, as in war, no one person is really indispensable. It is the hundred and thousand totals produced by these units that count. Ours is an imperfect world, but we must adapt ourselves to its imperfections, since it will not adapt itself to any one individual. Revolt against the world results in misanthropes, or in the chaos such as in Soviet Russia to-day.

Admittedly, most of us prefer being units in some business, service, or industry; monotonous though it may



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be, it means the comfort of a home and bread to eat. Should this peaceful comfort be menaced, then it is the duty and natural impulse of all to fight to save it. Might can only be driven back by greater might, and when the safety of the State is at stake, our safety too is at stake and so the insignificant cog in the industrial machine must be prepared to be an equally insignificant name on the Roll of Honour.

The repulse of an aggressor is not the only cause for which I should fight. Principles in which one has real faith are worthy of the sword's support. What these principles are, varies with each individual mind. To me, upholding national prestige, or the defence of a political creed would, in certain circumstances, be worth fighting for. My foster-mother, England, is the head of a vast commonwealth of nations. I consider it the moral obligation of every Englishman to preserve the safety of the Empire. It is a great heritage entrusted to our keeping.

Frequently I have been asked ‘What would you do if England declared war on Russia?’ Not a hard question to answer, because there is no cause for which I would fight with greater enthusiasm than against Communism. The man who will restore monarchy to Russia will be greater than Napoleon, who restored it to France. Like most White Russians, I am a staunch Royalist. Speaking to a fellow emigré in Paris, I informed him that I had become a naturalized Englishman. We both agreed that Soviet Russia meant nothing to us except the grim and soulless destroyer of Tsarist Russia, our Russia. So I inquired why he did not adopt French nationality. ‘You are lucky,’ he replied, ‘You have been adopted by a great country with a king. I dislike the idea of becoming one of Monsieur Herriot's or Monsieur Blum's subjects. It means nothing to me and so I prefer to remain without a country and hold on to my Nansen passport—hope-

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fully.' Fortunately, monarchy is also dear to every Englishman, for it stands for something more than a mere figurehead of the State. It is something worth fighting for. No doubt the abstract theorist will point out that the whole conception of Kingship is based upon emotions. But then, so are all human societies, including the family tie, the so-called corner-stone of civilization.

At the time of writing, war-clouds are rapidly gathering over Europe. The internal Spanish war has developed into an international conflict and the forces of Communism and Fascism stand opposed on Spanish soil. Both I consider to be evils, with Fascism the lesser of the two, for it is an antidote to that far more venomous poison, Communism. Abolish the latter and the need for Fascism automatically will vanish. In Hitler and Mussolini we have Europe's greatest safeguard against the extension of Communism and anarchy over the whole Continent. English people in general fail to see the need for Fascism, because they are faced with no real danger of Communism at home. Their insularity seems to prevent them seeing that the situation on the Continent is not the same, and that there, for the time being, Fascism is an absolute necessity. A Communist Spain would mean the growth of the Soviet cancer from both extremities of Europe. The first step of this expansion would be taken without much difficulty in the already very pink France. Even if Spain is saved, it would not surprise me if France turned red within a year or two. Moscow's predominance in Europe must be averted even at the cost of war. England would not be able to withstand an entirely Red Europe. It is all very well to sit back and say that every Russian refugee has the Bolshevik bee in his bonnet, but it is they themselves who scoffed at any idea of the danger of Bolshevism and for that very reason they were its victims. Experience is the best, if most painful, way of learning a lesson.

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Optimists believe that the Church will prove an effective barrier to Communism in France. They said the same thing about the importance of the Church to the Russian peasant. Nowadays the Church is not considered of sufficiently vital interest to be worth fighting for.

Mine would be an awkward dilemma indeed if England ‘backed the wrong horse’ and was embroiled on the Communist side of Spain. I should resent fighting for a political creed which I firmly believe to be pernicious and which has already deprived me of so much. In fact, I would decline fighting unless I was convinced that it was really and truly to England’s advantage to support the Reds. I owe a great deal to this country and also have a suspicion that her foreign policy is conducted on the lines of morality and justice only when it pays her so to do. Perhaps this accounts for the sympathy shown to the ‘democratic’ government of Spain. I hope there are grounds for this suspicion of practical politics under the veneer of righteousness and morality, though rather than be pro-Soviet, I should prefer to adopt the suggestion already put forward by some cunning wit, that evacuation of Spanish refugees should continue on such a grandiose scale that when the last Spaniard was out of his unfortunate country, Fascism and Communism could proceed to fight it out openly on a neutral ground. The League of Nations could then assume the rôle of spectator and be spared the tedious task of defining the aggressor.

We are not a militaristic country and yet most of England’s youth goes through a period of elementary military training with the school O.T.C. The idea of wearing uniform and carrying a rifle strongly appealed to me in my boyhood days and I joined the O.T.C. with great enthusiasm. I managed to rise to the giddy heights of Sergeant, but soon realized that the Corps was not a very militaristic institution. On one occasion I remember

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the ruddy-faced Sergeant-Major bawling at a rather sloppy platoon: 'Get in step there, you sanguinary illegitimate children!' (or words to that effect). 'The Corps' here to teach you how to walk.' This, it struck me, was practically all it did teach as far as modern warfare is concerned. Still, I suppose the War Office must have a means of using up old uniforms and rifles, though perhaps the time will come when the O.T.C. is brought up to date and includes in its curriculum gas-mask instruction, the art of making gas attacks and all the other useful horrors. Possibly, flying facilities will be extended to the schools, enabling older pupils to use the nearest R.A.F. depot for their weekly flight. Pilots take time to produce, and every pilot, we are told, is an asset to the country's safety.

At Oxford, the University O.T.C. carries on its good work, no doubt in the more advanced and practical sciences of war. Then there is the Air Squadron of which I am fortunate enough to be a member. And thus, without any compulsion, preparations for war continue in a peaceful, pleasant and almost subconscious way. Unattractive though war is, occasion may arise when resort to crime is the only solution. We may have to fight for self-preservation to save homes and families; the Empire may need our assistance; there may be an opportunity to save Russia and crush Communism. What we collectively hold to be right must be made mighty—that is, we must be prepared to fight. The age of wars for colonial expansion is over, as far as we are concerned. There remain, however, the 'have-not' nations. Before Mussolini marched into Abyssinia he stated in a public speech that Englishmen were decadent and he applied the Oxford Union's notorious resolution to the whole of Great Britain. To a certain degree, Benito's surmise was correct, for it appears that we were incapable of putting any effective opposition to his aggression. Disarmament proved to be a mistake.

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What we believed to be right was not sufficiently backed by strength.

A Utopia in which no human beings will want to fight is an ideal cherished by most. Perhaps the Oxford Union intended that all mankind should adopt their attitude towards war. That, indeed, would solve the problem, but much spadework must be done on the road to lasting peace before this happy thought can materialize. The League of Nations is working for this end, but it is faced with a superhuman task. Every practical materialist is aware of the impossibility of continued absence of quarrel and dissension in one human family. How much less likely is there to be perfect harmony among numerous nations of different race, language and temperament. Attempts are being made to eliminate the causes of war by readjustments among the ‘have’ and ‘have-not’ nations. Even when the present causes of war are removed, I fear fresh ones will appear, for human nature changes very slowly. However, it is reassuring that the peace-mentality is spreading over the whole world. Ironically enough, the paradoxical doctrines of Fascism and Communism both claim to be striving for peace, which will be attained when one has conquered the other. Democracy, too, strives for peace. Assuming, then, that all men are peace-loving, it is only the methods of attaining this peace and the conditions attached to it, that differ. Democracy wants peace with liberty: it is more sober-minded and rather inert, possibly through lack of faith in the absolute genuineness of its doctrine. Not so with Communism and Fascism. Both are mighty; both are open to criticism for fanaticism and the excesses of terrorism; the atrocities of the Bolsheviks have their counterpart in Hitler’s anti-semitism. To what extent Jewish influence was responsible for the Russian Revolution and Marxism in Germany is open to conjecture. I

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know little of their race, except that they appear to be in possession of brilliant intellect and shrewdness, which enable them to control public opinion by ownership of the press and cinema corporations, all finance by their banks and big business, and to a large extent international relations. For this reason I consider it at least brave of Hitler to have opposed and efficiently overcome such a preponderant influence which still maintains its omnipotence elsewhere in Europe.

An old adage 'Might is Right' still holds good. History shows that in international treaties, agreements and guarantees are respected only as long as it is expedient to do so. Force is the agent which commands this respect. Perhaps some fortunate future generation will review ours with contempt, and call us primitive men who fought and slew each other and nearly destroyed civilization. It will be a generation which will not have to contend with Communism, nationalism, mob mentalities and the neurosis of demagogues. Even in democratic England the mob mind exists and different shades of individual opinion are stifled in order to be welded into the force of party. This is done willingly, for the individual who believes in his chosen party realizes that it must be made strong. He must also have firm faith in his party's statesmen, for mankind is the plaything of politics.

In the quest for peace England does not intend to impose her creed on others, as rival doctrines do. To this peace, I attach security from absorption by aggressive rivals, and I am prepared to fight for King and Country.

The era of peace and good-will among all men is not yet at hand.

‘AS A COMMUNIST I WILL FIGHT FOR . . .’

JAMES FORSTER

Pen-name of one well known when an undergraduate who must remain anonymous—This precludes any detailed account of his activities—Age 23—Member of the Communist Party of Great Britain—Contributor of short stories and reviews to *New Writing* and *Left Review*.





## ‘AS A COMMUNIST I WILL FIGHT FOR...’

‘Nor will my mind permit me to linger in the love, the motherkindness of country among ascending trees knowing that love must be liberated by bleeding, fearing for my fellows, for the murder of man.’

REX WARNER.

**M**Y beliefs are those of a Communist, and I do not think I shall have cause to change them despite the fact that I have met innumerable people who have told me, with a twinkle in their eye and some new shares in their pocket, they were once Communists when they were young.

I have been asked to give, as far as possible, personal views for fighting or not fighting, rather than a statement of party policy. But the strength of the working-class, and of a working-class party, lies in its cohesion. I can well understand that Conservatives writing in this book can give various personal reasons for being willing to fight, and that Independents will give various personal reasons for being either willing or unwilling to fight. But the only personal reasons I could possibly give are those reasons which made me a Communist: and they would here be out of place. I can only say that I have seen, have read, have thought: and that this has led me to accept a view which is not merely my personal view, but also a party view—and the view of an international party. As far as it is possible I shall express this view in the light of its repercussions upon myself, as an individual, faced with a war situation: but I cannot attempt to separate these

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personal repercussions from the question of what action, in such a situation, is in the interests of the working peoples of the world—interests which I believe to be those of society and of humanity as a whole. It is with such reservations, then, that I approach this question—Would I fight?

(1)

The nonsense talked and written about the Oxford Union's 'King and Country' motion needs no further comment. But it is in those terms that the question is most often presented: would I fight for my King and Country? And though I do not think that such a formulation strikes to the roots of the problem, it is perhaps best to make the preliminary approach across this more familiar ground. Would I fight for my King and Country?

The phrase is a clever one, of course. 'Would I fight? . . .' That implies a personal choice, a voluntary act of self-sacrifice, altruism, idealism. '*My* King and Country.' The glory of a personal bond, as though there were no inevitability of hereditary succession in the selection of the monarch; the glory of patriotism. . . . But the phrase ceases to be clever in that it couples King and Country, thereby limiting the interpretation which could otherwise be put upon 'Country.' Let us begin, therefore, by separating them. First, would I fight for my King? Secondly, would I fight for my Country?

Would I fight for my King? But, first of all, can I regard him as *my* King? In the days of George V it was more difficult—psychologically, though not politically—for many to answer a negative to that question. The press, the wireless, and the cinema had been cleverly used to foster the impression of a personal link between sovereign and people. The cough at the microphone was the supreme symbol of their human equality, and many

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families had their own Jubilee procession on May 6th in form of dinner plus theatre plus night club if they were fashionable, or, if otherwise, of a more than usually justifiable if less dignified pub-crawl: till the B.B.C. finally hit the nail on the head with their ‘This Great Family’ broadcast on Christmas Day of 1935. Psychologically, *my* King was a very relevant conception of a great number of people. But in the days of Edward VIII it was to many inconceivable that this King would ever ask them to fight for *him*; especially when, in South Wales he spoke the words not of a king but of a practical man who could not, in the manner of another of our national figures, keep his lips sealed. To many it seemed that he felt himself far more responsible to his people than he felt them responsible to him. The relevant words were ‘*my* people’ on his part, not ‘*my* King’ on theirs: and in a war situation that would have been very awkward—at least for the Carlton Club. And in the days of George VI? The instruments of propaganda are again getting to work, but they will need to work hard to restore the personal bond in its original form: and The Princess Elizabeth has had to become the mainstay of The Family which is at the heart of ‘This Great Family’ which the B.B.C. tells us is the Empire. So that history is hardly on the side of those who wish me to call George VI ‘*my* King’ and when the psychological impulse to use the words is lacking, the political impulse *not* to use them becomes even stronger.

On the political side, more must be said. For in the days which have just gone by it has become increasingly clear to large numbers of people that the King is, after all, only a political instrument. ‘They stopped Edward marrying twice before,’ says a newspaper placard, and many have come to realize that ‘they’ can stop a king doing many other things—‘they’ being the Tory politicians, the bishops and big business. It is clear from the

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abdication crisis that the King is only a far more compelling symbol of Imperial unity than Mr. Baldwin, the Archbishop of Canterbury or Lord Nuffield, and that he is their instrument, that it is they who would suffer if the words 'God Save the King' were irrelevant in this and the other countries of the Empire. In other words, it is apparent that the King is only an instrument of the State power, and that in so far as his actions are concerned, it is the Imperial interests of this State power which are the decisive factor. So that he is not '*my* King' politically, any more than he is so psychologically: he is but a symbol of Imperial interests, whether as the centre of 'This Great Family' or as the instrument of 'them.'

Therefore, the question becomes not 'Would I fight for *my* King' but 'would I fight for *the* King?' And, from the above, the answer is clear: not unless Imperial interests are paramount for me. Whence, since I am a Communist and believe that Imperialism means oppression and a deliberate retardation of the growth of national culture (compare the illiteracy of India under many decades of British rule with the almost total literacy achieved by the Soviet Union in nineteen years), I will certainly not fight for the King because Imperial interests are abhorrent to me. Not only that, but also I shall attempt to show later that, in this twentieth century, war is solely a product of Imperialism and can be abolished with the abolition of that economic system, capitalism, which gives rise to Imperialism.

Would I, then, fight for my Country? I must acknowledge immediately that it is *my* country. Except for brief travels abroad I have lived in England all my life. I love England—the Malverns and the Lakes, Cornwall and the Norfolk Broads, North Wales and the Cotswolds. And I have quoted at the head of this essay four lines of a sonnet by Rex Warner, a Communist poet, which to me reveals

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a feeling for the English countryside which few other modern poets have equalled. This sonnet begins:

‘How sweet only to delight in lambs and laugh by streams,  
Innocent in love wakening to the early thrush,  
To be awed by mountains and feel the stars friendly,  
To be a farmer’s boy, to be far from battle.’

I love England in those terms. Would I, then, fight for it? The answer cannot yet be given, because the question is not fully stated.

In the first place, if it is a question of fighting for King and Country, it must be obvious that ‘King’ presupposes a certain conception of ‘Country,’ and in the phrase ‘King and Country’ I cannot see my country in the way I love it.

Secondly, England is not a world and never can be. Frenchmen love France as I love England, and I think we are both right: and this love is something simple, natural, instinctive and completely without jealousy. Therefore, I cannot see war as a rivalry merely of these respective loves of the nations concerned, and if it is a question of fighting for one’s country, then those who originate and control wars must love (or say they ‘love’) their countries far more than I love mine. But for what else can they love their Countries?

Perhaps, in the case of England, it is because England is supposed to be a ‘free country.’ Let us inspect this freedom. The Englishman with a certain financial security or independence who doesn’t like the idea of Socialism characteristically says: ‘I can at least be free in England.’ But the matter does not end there: questions of income and rent arise. Freedom of opinion—he may have his opinion, but is it *effective* in these matters? And if his ‘independence’ does bring him a certain, but limited, absence of discomfort (for instance, he can have a bath-

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room in the house, instead of twenty yards away from it like the South Wales miner), what of those millions who have no such financial 'independence'? Is this freedom? I cannot recognize it as such, even for the 'independent' gentleman who continually resents any mention of those politics in which I happen to believe. I see this 'Freedom' of ours as a freedom for the employer but not for the employed, because I see men already in possession of the technical ability to produce for all whatever any single man can really need, and yet, according to Sir John Orr's report on Food, Health and Income, four and a half million people in this country live below starvation level and nine million others are inadequately fed. You may not agree with the word 'exploitation' to describe such a state of affairs, but I think you must at least agree that such is hardly the aspect of 'freedom.' I have already dealt, too, with the Imperial tradition of England. This tradition and this 'Freedom' are generally supposed to be the glory of England, and these are what we are called to defend when we are asked to fight for our country. I cannot see in them anything to defend or to fight for.

Yet I love England. In what circumstances *would* I fight for her?

(2)

We Communists are often accused (too extravagantly or un-cleverly by *The Daily Mail* and *The Saturday Review* and more subtly elsewhere) of fomenting class-struggle, class-hatred and class-war. This is incorrect: we *diagnose* class-struggle. Marx did not say that the worker must hate his master; he gave no such injunction. On the contrary, by analysing the capitalist system with its emphasis on private initiative and production for profit, he came to the conclusion that the worker would inevitably come, without any external aid in the form of

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political propaganda, to hate and to resent the domination of his master both through his direct experience of the poverty which such domination imposes upon him and also through observation of the increasing difficulties with which capitalism is bound by the laws of its own development to be faced; and that the worker will struggle to improve his lot and will struggle against the increasing impoverishment (wage-cuts, unemployment) which are forced upon him when his master attempts to solve these difficulties which the system itself involves. That is class-struggle—diagnosed, analysed, not advised or forced. The Communist does not wish class-struggle: he is faced with it as a fact.

The differences between the official leadership of the Labour Party and the Communists are well-known, but the reason for these differences is not; and the reason affects foreign policy and domestic policy alike. For the Communist sees the leaders of the Labour Party, on almost every question of policy that arises, trying to avoid this fact of class-struggle and to smooth over these class differences; and he believes that such an attempt on the part of Labour leaders can only lead eventually to a more bitter intensification of these differences. In domestic policy, it means that class-strife, when it breaks out—as we believe, from analysis, that it must—will be the more severe because the Labour politicians have tried to pacify it almost to the same extent as the capitalists. In foreign policy, it means that the working-class is being led by these Labour politicians into a situation where they will be fighting for Imperialist interests instead of for their own. Hence the criticism of the orthodox Labour view, by the brilliant opposition within the Labour Party itself and by the Communists.

This is important, because I come now to the question of the class-war in the strictest sense of an armed struggle,

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to the question of social revolution. Again, this is diagnosed, not advocated.

For the task of a working-class party is to rationalize this feeling of class-hatred and struggle which to the working-class is at first only unconscious, instinctive and uncontrolled; to rationalize it, to control it, to make it conscious (class-consciousness) and to lead it along channels in which it will be effective. That is to say, I, as a Communist, am concerned with converting the worker's instinctive feeling of class-difference into action on his part, conscious, controlled action which will lead to the breaking down once and for all of all class-barriers. And in practice that is actually found to involve less violence than if, say, in a strike situation, the strike committee were quite politically unconscious. The same is the case in the wider field of government as in the limited one of a factory dispute.

Now, in this wider field, the principles of Communism are just the same. Again, Marx did not advocate the overthrow of the State machinery: his analysis showed him that this was bound to happen and that a working-class party must be ready to control this seizure by the working-class of all the machinery of government. This is the revolution, and here is the difference between the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the German Revolution at the end of the War: because in Russia Lenin and his colleagues were prepared for the event and knew how to lead the instinctive revolt of the Russian people, whereas in Germany there was no-one to follow Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg: and in Russia the actual revolution was bloodless, and was turned to civil war only by the armed resistance of the minority of the rich and privileged (who were aided by foreign intervention) to the wishes of the overwhelming mass of the Russian workers and peasants, whereas in Germany, where there



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was no conscious control, the attempt at revolution was bloody from the beginning.

The point of which is to show that, when I say that I am willing to fight on the side of the working class in such a civil war (resulting from the angry resentment of the rich at the sign of any attempt on the part of the working class to govern their own lives), I am not callously showing indifference to the value of human lives, but am carefully analysing the structure of capitalism, diagnosing from that analysis its inability to work successfully without continually impoverishing the working-classes, diagnosing also the fact of struggle on the part of the working class against such impoverishment, and showing my willingness, in consequence, to share and to endeavour to control that struggle up to and beyond the point at which it will inevitably show its maturity in the form of a practical, planned and constructive attempt to put Socialism into effect in this country and to work for the establishment of a classless society, even if such an attempt involves a civil war. And I maintain that the responsibility for such a civil war will rest not with the Communists, nor with the working class, but with the few who possess much and are unwilling to share it.

I love England: but only 850,000 persons in England have more than five hundred pounds a year, and of these, seventy-nine have £180,500 each, whereas 22,700,000 get less than five hundred a year and twelve million of these get less than £122. How much of England can one enjoy with just over a hundred pounds a year? I love England and I want England to belong to the English, to all the English and not to seventy-nine Englishmen. Therefore I will fight to win England for the English: and the only way of doing that is to fight for the expropriated, for the working class, for the sixteen millions who get only £3 a week.

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I will fight that war. In other words, if I were a Spaniard I would be fighting now for the Government. There the struggle has been precipitated, has taken the form not of the working class against capitalism, but of Democracy against Fascism, the latter being merely an aggravated and ruthless phase of capitalism when faced with the phenomenon of economic crisis inherent in it: and the Spanish civil war is not in any sense a working-class revolution. But I would fight for the Government if I were a Spaniard, because the insurgent coup of June 18th was aimed chiefly at the working class, whose democratic electoral success was resented by the industrialists and landlords, and because any threat to democracy is also a threat to the working class. I believe the Spanish Government will win this civil war, and then, when Democracy has been strengthened against Fascist (i.e., aggravated capitalist) aggression, the transition to Socialism, the actual revolution, will take place naturally and without violence as it always will take place in every country, though it will be preceded or succeeded, as in Spain now and in Russia in 1917, by the angry armed onslaught of the frustrated property owners who are rich enough to buy the support of those who cannot see the issues involved. And in England too, in England, above all, in this England which I love, this revolution will happen peacefully but will, though I wish against the evidence that I could believe otherwise, be preceded or succeeded by a civil war which will be the responsibility of what to me is 'the other side.' I say 'to me'—because I am willing to fight in that war on the side of the working class, the only class which by its action can finally abolish all class barriers.

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(3)

The question of war unfortunately does not stop there. The Marxist analysis goes beyond the mere noting of the difficulties in the form of economic crisis with which capitalism is bound to be faced, and analyses further the ways in which capitalism attempts to surmount these difficulties. In any particular industry the capitalist ‘solution’ is by the cutting out of the smaller capitalists and the establishment of monopolies, together with speeding-up, wage-cuts, dismissal of large numbers of workers and other methods of placing the burden of the difficulties on the working class rather than allowing any curtailment of profits: such methods, as we have seen, are signs of class struggle, which is waged by both sides and not by the worker alone. But when such difficulties beset a whole group of industries, that is to say, when a whole nation is faced with this chronic dilemma of capitalism, its inability to dispose of all the consumers’ goods which it has the ability to produce, such methods will not work. There is a lack of adequate markets, and the home market will not always respond to the artificial stimulus given by the establishment of monopolies and the further oppression of the workers. It becomes necessary for capitalism to *force* new foreign markets. This is Imperialism which Lenin has brilliantly analysed in his essay ‘Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.’ And Imperialism means war. The conquest of India by Britain and its present exploitation by British interests is Imperialism: and whether British opinion was opposed to the venture or not, Mussolini’s aggression against Abyssinia was a faithful imitation of the British model. Moreover, between the various Imperialist sovereign States, no two of which are in the same stage of development, there are bound to be rivalries: the markets of one are coveted by another, or by a group of others either individually or collectively. It was

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such rivalry that led to the last war, the Great War of 1914 to 1918. And further still, the greedy eyes of Imperialism are now bound to turn in the direction of the Soviet Union. This is the war which Hitler, the saviour of German Imperialism, is planning against Russia: the war which he preaches in those passages of *My Struggle* which he forbade to be published in the English translation of that book. This is the war which Japan is planning against Russia in addition to her achieved exploitation of Manchuria and her desired exploitation of China.

As a Communist, I condemn all such wars. The Communists in Germany working underground are combating every phase of the Nazi War Policy. The Communists in Italy resolutely and bravely opposed Mussolini's onslaught on Abyssinia. The Communists in both countries cannot sanction German and Italian intervention in Spain, and the Japanese Communists opposed the subjugation of Manchuria and oppose now the Japanese drive in China. These wars are abhorrent to us: in the words of Lenin, 'Socialists have always condemned wars between peoples as barbarous and bestial' and we say that they are also quite unnecessary, because we know that the internal difficulties of the capitalist system which they attempt, but fail, to solve, need not arise under a Socialist system. War is the product of Imperialism: Socialism abolishes the need for Imperialism: therefore Socialism is a guarantee of peace.

Therefore, having approached the problem from another angle, I repeat the conclusion I pointed when considering the question of fighting for King and Country: that is, I would not fight in a war either defending or extending Britain's Imperial interests, and I favour the most intense propaganda amongst all classes, but particularly amongst the working class, against participation in such aggression or such defence.

(4)

Am I, therefore, willing to surrender England to any nation which may choose to attack this country? I am not.

In the first place, on the subject of rearmament, we Communists believe that by its policy of perpetual concessions to Nazi Germany—in strange contrast to its treatment of democratic pre-Hitler Germany—by its assistance in respect of Japanese aggression in Manchuria and Italian aggression in Abyssinia, the National Government has forfeited any claim it might have had to be trusted with armaments.

Secondly, we cannot believe that the National Government would ever wage a war except in self-interest, in accordance with its Imperialist motives, which also condition its foreign policy. Therefore, to condone its war aims and war plans would be to carry the working class into a war which could only heap more disaster on its head.

Thirdly, this refusal *in advance* to participate in the defence of Imperialist interests is a valuable political weapon which can be used in order to bring pressure to bear on the Government to enforce a more satisfactory peace-promoting foreign policy. This may sound unreal at the moment, but if the official Labour Party leadership would only take up this attitude, the National Government would have far less freedom to toy with Hoare-Laval plans for selling out Abyssinia or to refuse arms to the democratic Spanish Government: and the international situation would be consequently less menacing.

But suppose, someone will want to ask me, this war of defence was a war of defence against Fascist aggression, wouldn't you then be in an awkward dilemma? Not in the least. For me, as a Communist, the logic of the growing strength of the working class movement is the only logic which I acknowledge. In a country like France, where the working-class movement is already strong

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enough to constitute a serious and immediate challenge to the capitalist system, such a situation could be faced from the first by that movement with the slogan 'Workers' Control' of all departments of war, and such a slogan would certainly win the day: the working class movement would already be strong enough not to be prejudiced by the fact that the war was originally one of Imperialist defence, and would be certain that it was really fighting for France for the French in the fullest sense of the word.

In England, too, except for the attitude of the official Labour leaders, the working-class movement is *potentially* strong enough to issue such a challenge. But I fear that these Labour leaders would once more, in such a situation, raise the old MacDonaldite cry of 'national emergency' and unconditional support of the 'National' policy, whether the present 'National' combination were in power or not. Such capitulation would be a disaster and would prejudice all that the working class movement has managed to gain in this country. Therefore, we Communists would have no alternative but unconditional opposition to the whole principle of the war and would work steadily for a reversal of that policy before considering any question of defending the country: because we believe that the country is not worth defending except in the interests of the working class, and we must be certain that those interests are paramount in the struggle before we fire a single gun. If, however, the Labour leaders did not capitulate in this way, then the potential strength of the working-class movement in this country would be its *actual* strength, the slogan of 'Workers' Control' would be real and relevant, and we could be certain that a war originally for the defence of Imperial interests would become a war for the defence of England in the interests of the working class. During the last war, Lenin said:

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‘Only a bourgeois who believes that the war started by the governments will necessarily end as a war between governments, and who wishes it to be so, finds “ridiculous” or “absurd” the idea that the Socialists of *all* the belligerent countries should express their wish that *all* “their” governments be defeated. On the contrary, such expression would coincide with the hidden thoughts of every class-conscious worker, and would be along the line of our activity which tends to turn the imperialist war into civil war. An earnest anti-war propaganda by a section of the English, German and Russian socialists would undoubtedly “weaken the military strength” of the respective governments, but such propaganda would be to the credit of the Socialists. The Socialists must explain to the masses that there is no salvation for them outside of a revolutionary overthrow of “their” governments and that the difficulties of those governments in the present war must be taken advantage of for just this purpose.’

Twenty-one years after these words were written it is possible to see in France a working-class movement so strong that those principles laid down by Lenin would quickly prove effective, and the workers’ Government, consequent upon their success, would be strong enough to fight a war with both its external and internal enemies at the same time. In such a situation is England, i.e., if the Labour leaders would allow the potentialities of the working-class movement to be realized, I would fight in that war. But if the Labour leaders capitulated, I should oppose a war, which would be solely Imperialist, and not a war in defence of democracy, and should work for that turning of ‘Imperialist war into civil war’ mentioned by Lenin. For it is that Civil War which alone can, in such circumstances, promote the best interest of the working class.

. . . . .

Rex Warner concludes the sonnet already quoted in part with the lines:

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'How should I live then but as a kind of fungus,  
Or else as one in strict training for desperate war?'

Here is an acknowledgment by Warner of his (and my) dilemma: that he must either feel himself as useless and as parasitic as a fungus or go into 'strict training' for that final struggle which will liberate the working class from capitalism and abolish class inequalities for all time. I have tried to show the implications of participation in that struggle upon the question of my willingness or otherwise to fight.

'Nor will my mind permit me to linger in the love,  
The motherkindness of country among ascending trees  
Knowing that love must be liberated by bleeding,  
Fearing for my fellows, for the murder of man.'

I do fear for my fellows and for the murder of man, and seeking some way to make that fear less great, seeking some way of abolishing war for ever, I have become a Communist, since I believe Communism eradicates the primary causes of war. Therefore my mind will not permit me to linger in an abstract love of my country since the most important thing for me is the growth of the working-class movement as a guarantee of peace: nor will my mind permit me to participate in any other war unless it serves directly the interests of that movement.



*‘UNWILLINGLY CONVERTED FROM PACIFISM . . .’*

JAMES BROWN

Age 23—President of the Oxford Union Society, 1936  
—Ex-President O.U. Liberal Club—Elected to represent  
Oxford Union in American Debating Tour, 1937—  
Prospective Liberal Candidate for Wells Division—  
Reading for the Bar.



## ‘UNWILLINGLY CONVERTED FROM PACIFISM...’

**T**HE young generation is notorious for believing that it is the first to think for itself, unhampered by unreasonable prejudice and out-dated conventions. Probably our elders are correct when they say that they too had ‘daring’ or ‘revolutionary’ ideas on politics, religion and sex, a generation ago. What we may be pardoned for doubting is whether many of them asked themselves this question, ‘Would I fight?’ We need not claim any greater share of either idealism or realism on this account. The change is to be found not in the nature of the people, but in the nature of war. If there are more Pacifists to-day than there were thirty years ago, it is not because of a more enlightened humanitarianism, nor because of a greater willingness to question what was formerly accepted as axiomatic. It is simply because many people have realized what war in the second quarter of the twentieth century would mean.

At school I became a Pacifist. So did several of my friends, most of them because they decided that war in any form was incompatible with both the spirit and the letter of Christianity. The considerations which induced me to accept the Pacifist doctrines were partly humanitarian and partly practical. I loathed physical violence, but this alone would not have been enough. I knew that if it had been possible to put the clock back to 1914 I would have been as ready to fight as anyone. What made me a firm Pacifist was the conviction that every sensible and patriotic man must recognize that peace should be

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maintained at any price. I seized rapturously on old commonplaces. Sayings such as 'It takes two to make a quarrel' acquired new meanings for me. I satisfied my histrionic sense by visualizing myself thrown into gaol or even shot as a notorious conscientious objector in the next war. Soon I was able to believe that hundreds of thousands would be willing to follow my example, first in Britain, later throughout the world.

War, I was sure, could be abolished by the triumph of a universal Pacifism which appealed simultaneously to man's patriotism, commonsense and cowardice. War was to be denounced as the certain destroyer of everything of which our country was proud, its culture, its Empire. The whole tremendous folly was to be irrefutably expounded. The conclusion which must then be drawn—peace at any price—would have a special appeal to all who were physical cowards. I was sure that nine men out of ten were both patriots and cowards and that they all prided themselves on their common sense whether they possessed it or not.

Six months in Germany shattered many of my ideas. I arrived on January 27th, 1933, three days before Hitler became Chancellor. When I left in July, I was convinced that it was hopeless to think of converting the Germans to an acceptance of anything like Pacifism. They had, of course, plenty of patriotism, but they would not admit even to themselves, so far as I could see, that they were in the least cowardly. Further, when I talked of common sense, they invariably denounced rationalism as a source of their country's misfortunes. By a strange paradox the people, which was perhaps the best educated in the world, had fully accepted all the anti-intellectualism preached by National Socialists.

I came home still clinging to the hope that if the world as a whole could not be saved, at least my own country

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could. I now became very, very fond of saying ‘It takes two to make a quarrel.’ I was prepared to suffer anything, and to allow my friends and relations to suffer anything rather than that London and two or three other large cities should be obliterated in a single night. I believed in unilateral disarmament. In fact, I went up to Oxford as complete a Pacifist as anyone could be.

In less than a year I had been unwillingly persuaded to change my mind. To a large extent this was due to the speeches made to the University Liberal Club. Interminable conversations with many new friends influenced me too. Some of them were Socialists who believed that there would always be a last resort in which man would fight. This they were quite prepared to provide for him in the form of the class struggle, or the fight against Fascism and Imperialism. Those with whom I came to agree were willing to fight in the cause of collective security. Acceptance of pure Pacifism, they showed me, involved total disarmament. This in turn implied willingness to lose all imperial possessions, national prosperity and political freedom. I might be able to convince myself of my own resignation to all these losses, but did I really believe that anything like half the country would support me? I soon saw that I did not. It was obvious that to preach a Pacifism which could not be successful was a dangerous waste of time. There were then three alternatives for a national foreign policy:—armed anarchic isolationism, military alliances, collective security. The first was quite impossible because no single country could ever hope to be stronger than any potential alliance of enemies. The second involved a return to the old diplomacy, the object of which was not so much to avert war as to make defeat as unlikely as possible in the event of war. Besides, other countries can prove unfaithful, as Germany found to her cost in 1914. That left collective security. Soon I was

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concerned not so much with whether it would be a sound system as with its actual details.

Lord Lothian influenced me more than any other individual, though I only heard him speak once. He was addressing the University Liberal Club and made a short, logical and unemotional speech. It had a profound effect on many others besides myself. It is interesting that he who three years ago could be so convincing now no longer believes in a world-wide system of collective security.

I have said that I was unwillingly converted from Pacifism. To the present day, I would gladly return to it if I believed it to be practicable. Now, however, we have seen the Italian conquest of Abyssinia. Relatively to Italy, Abyssinia was unarmed. Unless help were forthcoming from the League, it was hopeless to resist. The Abyssinians did resist, however, even when it was clear that they would not receive outside help. There will always be large numbers of people who will resist, if it is possible and although it is useless. These thus bring destruction on large numbers of their fellows.

Another difficulty which is increasing every year is that it is becoming virtually impossible to localize war. This is all too obvious in Spain where the two countries which talk most about the necessity of economic, moral, and cultural isolationism are carrying on a crusade against Communism. They may succeed in turning a civil war into a world disaster. If it were possible to localize major wars we could do what so many people are advising our own Government to do—stand aside and watch the Fascist and Communist countries fight each other to the death. This is quite an attractive proposal to many who hold that both Fascism and Communism are damnable creeds. Probably this attitude is offset by the feeling that it is unfortunate (to say the least of it) that thousands or

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millions of Germans, Italians and Russians should be slaughtered for the sins of their rulers. In any case, even if this policy of aloofness were desirable, it is difficult to see how it could possibly be achieved. There is not one large country in Europe which is not very closely connected by ties of trade or politics, if not of actual treaties, to at least one other European country, which would thus be directly affected. If Germany threatens Russia, France is drawn in. If Germany then contrives to overrun France, we are placed in a difficult position and are likely to be drawn in too. It is obviously better to be prepared for a situation like this before it arises, in order that we may be sure that the solution is a sound one. That is what collective security provides.

Though no longer a Pacifist, I find that I have very little sympathy with many anti-Pacifists. A speech by Mr. Duff-Cooper is almost enough to make me sign the Peace Pledge. (It is always exasperating when people who are on the right side argue in the wrong way.) Generally speaking, the Pacifist and I accept the same data, though we place a different interpretation on them. The anti-Pacifists with whom I do not agree do not accept these data. They talk of war in the general terms of the nineteenth century. Though they actually speak of trenches, tanks and even occasionally of aeroplanes and poison gas, they are thinking of cavalry charges and thin red lines. When I discuss issues of peace and war with them (as I very seldom do now), I am usually informed that there is virtually no difference between Canon Sheppard's views and my own, and that both are cowardly and unpatriotic. The Pacifist and I can at least listen to each other with patience, and give each other credit for good intentions and intellectual honesty.

In one respect my Pacifism was based on moral grounds. Under the influence of Herbert Spencer I came to dis-

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Some day a scheme of defence against the bombing 'plane may be found. Until then, questions about 'guarding the coasts of old England' are irrelevant.

Thus we find that it is quite useless for Great Britain to attempt to be so strong in herself that she will always be able to fight back. Her only chance of security lies in being so strong that no-one will dare to attack her. As has been already shown, she cannot defend herself against sudden attack, nor will national reprisals be possible. There is one obvious solution—an international police force. A detailed scheme for the realization of this ideal has been worked out by the society known as the New Commonwealth. This scheme has the support of numbers of people throughout the world, especially in the United Kingdom and France. It will, however, be long before an appreciable proportion of world opinion can be said to support it. In the meantime, we cannot wait. War would almost certainly come before even the constitution of such a force had been agreed on. I will continue to do my best to convert others to a belief in the necessity for such a force, but I will also look for a substitute which, though less certain of complete success, will be likely to preserve peace in the intervening period.

The only means of achieving this that I can see is to make the League effective, despite the existence of powerful national defence forces. This can only be done by being willing to fight for it. That I am perfectly prepared to do. With every other British subject, I am already committed to it. But if I do fight, it will not be for a vague ideal. Much less will it be for Poland or Russia or whichever country has been attacked. I will not be fighting because war is a Bad Thing, nor because I think it is wrong for two nations to exterminate each other nor for any other contradictory reason. I will not expect to be twice armed because my quarrel is just. I will be fighting



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because I think that only thus can peace be secured, and because it is in the selfish interests of my own country to see that peace is secured.

A terrible mistake was made over Abyssinia. Adequate sanctions were not imposed, the British Government refusing to take the lead. It even allowed its Foreign Secretary to lead the retreat from the sanctions policy which he had so inspiringly initiated. The reason given for this refusal was that stronger sanctions might mean war with Italy. That, of course, was self-evident, but it also applied to any sanctions which were meant to be effective. Let us suppose that the limited sanctions which were imposed had been successful—that is, had seemed likely to prevent the Italian armies from conquering Abyssinia. Mussolini, as a Fascist dictator, could not have admitted defeat. He would have been compelled either to make war on one of the powers opposed to him, in the hope that all the others would then withdraw: or, in desperation, flee from Italy. If, in fact, the British Government was sincere in its efforts to restrain him, it must have been known from the beginning that sanctions, if successful, might well provoke him to attack.

That was a risk which ought to have been taken because it was a prudent risk. It would have been prudent because there was at that time an alliance of nations against the aggressor such as there had never been before, and such as it will not be easy to achieve again. If Mussolini had attacked any member of that alliance, his own defeat was certain. He had no possible ally. Germany was positively pro-Abyssinian until it became obvious that the League powers were going to allow sanctions to fail. Thus he would either have had to admit failure and withdraw from Abyssinia, or he would have been openly defeated in Europe. In either case the authority of the League would have been vindicated, and it would not now be

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necessary for us to join in the insane armaments race. It would be clear that no aggressor, however powerful, could 'get away with it.'

There is one distinction which it is important to make. I would not advocate going to war with any country which broke the Covenant of the League. But I would not allow that other country to frighten me out of urging the strongest economic and diplomatic sanctions against it, by threatening to commit a second act of aggression. Lord Cecil expressed this point very clearly early in 1936 when he said: 'I am not prepared to go to war against Mussolini, but if as a consequence of carrying out my treaty obligations under the Covenant, Mussolini makes war on me, then I shall be prepared to resist.' Failure to appreciate this point has led to much misunderstanding in the past.

My willingness to fight for the League is not, I must repeat, a desire to serve in a sentimental crusade for peace. On the contrary, I think that very great harm was done to the cause of collective security by the clap-trap that was talked about 'gallant little Abyssinia.' There are three objections to this sort of peace propaganda. First it is obviously inaccurate: in Abyssinia we had a bad client. Domination by Fascists is unlikely to prove much more obnoxious to most of the natives than Amhara rule. Secondly, it is unpleasantly reminiscent of 'gallant little Belgium': we all know by now that whatever our real motives for entering the Great War were, they certainly were not that the neutrality of Belgium had been violated. (Lord Oxford and Asquith wrote in *The Genesis of the War*, p. 208: 'It is useless to speculate upon what might have happened had Germany avoided the fatal blunder of the Belgian violation, but it is certain that the British nation could not then have gone into the war with a united front.' This is a frank admission that the invasion

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of Belgium was used to bring in all those who might otherwise have opposed war with Germany.) Thirdly, it is bad business: the idealism which was so widespread in the years immediately after the war is gone. People are now frightened of the consequences of war. And no wonder. A book called *What would be the Character of a New War?* had a very large sale. The most striking contribution to this symposium was the essay on chemical warfare by Dr. Gertrud Woker, who stated that two commercial aeroplanes could carry enough Lewisite to destroy every single inhabitant of London. When knowledge of this type circulates it is not surprising if very many people decide that pure idealism is too costly. The League captured the imagination of the world as an idealistic conception. If it is to retain support it must be as a business proposition. As I have tried to point out, a good case can be made out for considering it sound. It remains to silence the sentimentalists.

. If people are prepared to fight for a cause nowadays they prefer to have something less vague than world peace. Many appear to be willing, even anxious, to fight for their political beliefs. Socialists want to fight for Russia. Fascists wanted to protect the Italians from the Abyssinians. I find that I have no such urge, not even to defend democracy in Spain. I would not enjoy doing any of these things, so it is lucky that I do not feel it incumbent on me to do them. I would be ready to defend Russia or Germany (if she were a member of the League) assuming that they were attacked. This is not because I like the government of either country. Mr. Churchill has said: ‘It is not a case of right or left, but of right or wrong.’ This refers not to the nature of the war to be fought, but to the country to be defended.

The division of wars into categories of just and unjust is misleading if one thinks that the actual combatants will

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fight with more fervour in the first kind. In 1513 Henry VII described his war against Louis XIII as 'a just, holy and somewhat necessary war.' In every recent war the combatants have believed their cause to be just and holy, and the statesmen or monarchs who persuaded or compelled them to fight have considered the war necessary. It may be difficult to believe, but it is nevertheless true that the Italian soldiers in Abyssinia honestly thought that their cause was both just and holy.

So far I have been speaking of defending the country which has been attacked. Actually I hope that it will not be necessary to go to war in defence of the Covenant. What is necessary is to be prepared to fight, otherwise the League's bluff can be called as in Manchuria and Abyssinia, and collective security will be unattainable. I hope that the threat will be sufficient, but I am afraid that on one occasion it will not. After one short and successful League war, the threat alone should always be sufficient.

As I have postulated that, if I want a condition of peace, as opposed to a mere uncertain absence of wars, I must be prepared to fight, it is very fortunate that I have no moral or humanitarian objection to fighting. It is true that I would almost certainly find it disgusting. I have by now realized, however, that much that is necessary or compulsory in this world is disgusting, and so I can reconcile myself more easily to the thought that I may have to kill individuals to whom I have not even been introduced.

The spirit then is willing. The flesh is alarmingly untrained. The only military training I have ever had was in a school O.T.C. in which I served for over four years. I have been informed that army authorities calculate that this is worth three weeks' training in wartime. As, apparently, a year's training was considered necessary at the beginning of the last war, and three months almost

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inadequate at the end, I cannot see that I am able to claim any very satisfactory qualifications for fighting. Nor do I see how I can improve my position. For at least several years to come I will not be able to join the Territorial Army, and even if I could, it seems doubtful if training for one day in the week and a fortnight of each year would make me any more useful in a first-class modern war. I cannot afford to learn to fly. What am I to do in order to prove the sincerity of my views?

Uncomfortably I find that I do not know.



*'IN DEFENCE OF TRADITION'*

R. J. M. GOOLD-ADAMS

Age 21—Educated at Winchester College and New College, Oxford—in 1937 secured Second Class Honours in Modern Greats—President of the O.U. Fascist Association Trinity Term, 1935—then forsook Fascism for orthodox Conservatism—Author of *South Africa To-Day and To-Morrow* (Murray)—son of a former Governor of South Africa—at present touring the United States.





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**I**N thinking of war, we have talked of peace. Men have come and gone from Geneva, some without the intention of returning. At home, newspapers and politicians have warned multitudes against the effects of modern warfare; and have continued in one breath to speak of pacts and the League and peace. But always an under-current of war-talk has moved beneath these efforts for peace; and the basis of it all has been that war to-day is a thing which destroys for everyone and builds for none, a thing which attacks home cities rather than armies in the field, a thing above all which will wipe out civilization if once we let it start in Europe.

And just as this dread of modern war has stimulated sane men to peace, so is it founded on reason. They have talked, these people, of three courses being open to each of us at the outbreak of war. By one we volunteer to fight, choosing perhaps our element—air, sea or land. By another we object to fighting, we decry war, we set ourselves above it—either because we are genuine Pacifists or else because we are afraid and forget that a bomb in our home is as sure as a shell in the field. If we refuse to fight, we shall be put into prison, for no nation in the future will be able to fight if it is without complete unity in itself.

While the third course open to us all will be to remain indifferent, to do nothing, neither to volunteer nor to object, to say of war ‘What of it?’ This course thousands have taken in the past, and thousands more will think to take it in the future. But in the past it has been allowed; in the future it will not be. Only once in the past was full

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conscription introduced in England; in the future it will probably be the first step of any major war. And all those of us who, for a mass of slightly differing reasons, may be inclined to sit back and think of war from a distance, neither wishing to fight nor yet objecting conscientiously in a loud voice, all this vast body of us—amounting even to a majority of the nation—we shall be conscripted, and allotted a service to perform for the State. Each according to his ability must be forced to propel this Leviathan through the waters of war. And if we refuse, we shall help the conscientious objectors scribble on the rough bricks of their cells.

War, modern war, is such a mighty conception that only a 'nation in arms' can be fit to deal with it. Conscription is an essential to it. I therefore see before each of us little chance of prevaricating in the face of it. Our feelings and our ideals and our own common sense will be submerged in the nation's war. And when it is put to me, would I fight, I must answer 'Yes': I believe I would be fighting, whatever the cause or object of the war—for prison is a place without honour or comfort or freedom. Beneath an aeroplane it is not even safe.

But to say when I would fight willingly and gladly of my own will is to answer a different question. It is, according to these three alternatives, tantamount to saying which I would choose in any given circumstances—to be imprisoned, to volunteer or to be conscripted. For when war comes one of these alternatives is likely to be forced on each of us, should we not first choose for ourselves! We shall not be able to stay at home and watch the country go to war.

I expect, I hate, I dread war. I expect war, for civilization is going mad; our age has a heritage of savagery, hysteria and emotion thrown at its feet; all the ideals it should hold dear are scorned; all the wisdom and reason

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and learning of the years is being swept aside as of no account. I hate war for its uselessness, its brutality, its barbarism: I hate it for our weakness in allowing it to remain in our world: it is an anachronism that lives only because we have not progressed from the days when it was glorified. And I dread war, for its ignobleness brings out the best in all people, but it brings out the worst as well: and the worst is more fully requited than the best.

Knowing all these things, I do not want to fight. But I know more; for I know that whatever each of us may feel, we must live in a real world where things we value must be protected—or else the word value has little meaning. I value intensely those things which this country possesses: I know therefore that I must protect them, that to protect them I must help war. In order even to keep that which is truly valuable in this mad world, I must stimulate, if need be, the greatest madness of all—and go to war.

It is easy enough to bring out the worst in a man and not too hard to bring out the best. All those who support war in theory, and add that it is something fine and great which brings people out of themselves, forget that all this can be done, and done better, by other means. They forget too that to ‘make’ one man, two perhaps must be slain. In order that valour may be recognized, the enemy must suffer. For war is like that. All that is ever achieved is at the expense of someone or something else, so that to-day, men can rise on platforms and say with much truth that the victor loses as much as the vanquished. They can say that Germany would be foolish to attack Russia, that Russia would be nearly as foolish to attack Germany, for the struggle would destroy them both: and with them would probably go the creeds which, in rivalry, inspired the war, so that neither would be the gainer. They can say that modern war exhausts economically the country

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which wins, just as it does the loser: and indeed that, judging from the last war, the loser might be more likely to recover first—if ever there will be recovery next time Europe fights. And in nearly all this they would be right, these men whom we listen to with gravity and attention and bowed head, but whom we forget when emotion comes.

But there is one case where the victor wins—even to-day. When a state, a nation, an empire is attacked, and fully staves off that attack, it remains free to enjoy what it possesses, where otherwise it would have lost those things. In such a case it has *won*. For even if it is exhausted, it still has its lands and its customs and its political freedom: it would have lost all these, and been economically exhausted as well, had it lost the war.

Here in Britain we can take this to heart. For if we fight a war in defence of ourselves or the empire, and win it, we have—to set against our dead and our enormous material losses—the continued existence of those things which we hold dear. If we lose them to a neighbour, we have lost absolutely. If fighting is ever worth while, then, it is worth while in order to protect Britain and the Empire against aggression.

For there might be some joy in defending something of value: and there would be a sense of the satisfaction of duty. There would be none, only a loathing of war, in fighting as an instrument of policy. Although conscription might be needed to make one fight the country's war in Europe, pure defence should be voluntary and willing and glad . . . even in the full realization of the bestiality of war.

And it would be hard for me, I think, to hate the enemy individually, unless I had been the complete dupe of previous propaganda. And even if I were fighting willingly to ward off direct invasion, the manner of war would still

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seem repulsive: the hatred might go to the Government of the enemy, but not to the man: and there would be no means of getting at the Government, but only at the man: the Government would be immune behind, but the man might lie at the end of my rifle. I would not willingly fight a war as an instrument of policy; for as an instrument it breaks, and the material on which it breaks—the men and the homes and the women of another nation—is not, piece for piece, even that against which the war was directed. As Kipling's verse runs,

'I do not love my Empire's foes,  
Nor call 'em angels: still  
What is the sense of 'atin' those  
'Oom you are paid to kill?'

For they, poor wretches, are only the material for the instrument. War, as an instrument, miscarries.

In modern war all the resources of our age would be used—and not least among these is propaganda. Even in the last Great War propaganda played its part. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler admires British and American war propagandists as psychologically correct. 'By displaying the German to their own people as a barbarian and a Hun, they were preparing the individual soldier for the horrors of war . . . which . . . were now, for him, merely a confirmation . . . and heightened his rage and hatred against the villainous enemy.'

Clever, extensive, soul-destroying propaganda would be used to stir each of us to emotional depths; to serve the State's ends we should necessarily be hoodwinked, cajoled, exhorted: made to forget our reason and slay the enemy, his civil population and his armies all in one: made to destroy his possessions, his cities and mines and roads, and all the product of his arts of peace.

But if we keep two things to ourselves against these

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exhortations, if we keep simply our reason and our humanity, each one of us, then such a war can only come in self-defence. For nothing else would we be willing to loose such a hell on the world. And yet those of us who feel noble enough not to fight such a war whatever the circumstances, not even to preserve our possessions, reckon without an unfortunate fact; that an unopposed successful attack on Britain by a selfish enemy would set each of us back into an age of poverty, of political difficulties and of insignificance for the peaceful progress of civilization. In order to preserve what we love and value, we must be ready to use the tortures of all that we loathe and despise.

And here, if I feel this, I am brought to pure questions of policy. Besides being unwilling to go to war except in a real emergency, I must know what in fact constitutes, or would constitute according to my knowledge, such an emergency. I must know something of the country's position; and then I must square it with my own valuations. I must balance it against those inclinations of mine, which in the knowledge that war is still used by nations in their pride, want to maintain Britain where she is, but do not on any account want to interfere to the possible extent of war where she is not essentially concerned.

At the end of the last Great War the League of Nations was born. Great Britain played a high part in its conception and in its early life, both because she had won the war and the League was a victor's product, and also because she had fine feelings and ideals and the League was an attempt to realize the greatest ideal of all. By the Covenant of the League, nations undertook many things; but the most important and the most difficult for them to carry out was the undertaking to interfere in each other's affairs when they were in difficulties and to set them right. All the world was to be made one: all the world was to

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help solve those difficulties which hitherto nations had only been able to solve between themselves by war. Provision was made for every kind of consideration of right and justice and equity; no nation was to feel that the League would not play fair.

But the thing which the League stood to prevent—war—could only be stopped by might, not right. War alone could prevent war: war alone could stop nations doing what they were set on doing. So the League of peace made provision for war too. The nations were to wage war against an aggressor; what would otherwise have had some chance of being a localized conflict, was now to become a question for the whole world.

It has seemed strange to me that the most sincere and devout Pacifists, both those who stand for peace on principle and those who merely want, as a first step, peace so far as this country is concerned, should be found among the ranks of the League's supporters. For the League failed from the beginning to realize the ideal which founded it. And having failed to gain either the support of all the Great Powers—surely an essential step—or the esteem and trust of many others, it inevitably devolved into the exact opposite of a League of Peace. It became a League of War. It came near to being the very firebrand of Europe. Balanced, even in theory, on the precarious necessity of using war, or the threat of war, in order to maintain peace, it came near to causing general war when Italy's Abyssinian campaign refused to turn into peace at the League's demand. Then only a refusal to carry out the Covenant prevented a European conflagration.

I see the League as a great ideal: but its practical existence is not yet. To-day it is a danger, not an aid to peace. I would not fight under any clause whatever of the Covenant of the League. I admire the energy of the men

who attempted to build on their ideal. But the building failed because the bricks were hollow.

On November 20th, 1936, the Foreign Secretary defined Britain's existing obligations under treaties already contracted; he was afraid, perhaps, of Grey's mistake of 1914. Among those obligations the terms of the Covenant of the League held a humble place: we would merely never resort to arms 'for a purpose inconsistent with the Covenant': and we would, it was implied, only support the Covenant where our interests were concerned. Our other Treaty obligations we should have to honour; we should honour them willingly—stimulated, perhaps, by the knowledge that they were contracted primarily as common-sense arrangements for protecting our own interests. But in the interpretation of these interests I would have to agree. I could not support a government which went parading round Europe on the general grounds that peace in Europe was our main safeguard; or a government which interfered between the two European blocs that are now forming, on the grounds that the eventual victory of either over the other would constitute a menace to our safety. They would only be a menace later, if at all, when, after years of recovery from the struggle, they would have become strong enough for the ruin of another war—with us. I would not stop Germany marching further than the standards of Napoleon ever went. I would not stop Italy building a new Holy Roman Empire in Central Europe. I would not stop Russia bringing the might of the East to the gates of the West.

I see nothing more dismal, more miserable, more wrong than dying in a cause which does not immediately concern me. For life is a thing only to be given once—and there are so many things at home for which it might be needed, and be more worthy. If I had been an American in 1917, I would have stayed at home.



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Of those obligations which the Foreign Secretary defined, some would clearly not immediately lead to a major war. And I, as a civilian, would leave their carrying out to the professional fighting man. There would be no need for everyone to fly to arms in the assistance of Irak—which we have guaranteed by treaty. The struggle might develop into a wider one: Turkey, the Near East, Russia, might become involved. But not until there came to be a danger to the actual life of the British Empire, would it be a war to concern all the nation. Egypt would be in a similar position, with the only difference that a struggle arising out of Egypt’s defence—to which we are also pledged by treaty—would be likely to spread further and more rapidly. For Egypt is at the crossways of the world: a crossways where Britain stands sentry for her own sake.

British armies are pledged to go to the defence of France and Belgium against ‘unprovoked aggression.’ The Netherlands are supposed to be a vital interest in which Britain has been selfishly concerned through all her recent history. But there is to-day a great change in our position, compared with that of the last few generations. To-day we can fly; yesterday we could not. It matters less to-day, and it will matter still less to-morrow, that a great enemy power should have control of the seaboard of the Netherlands. London and England are as vulnerable from a little further away as they are from fairly near. We are certainly concerned in Belgium and Holland, but surely no longer to the extent of going to war to protect them where otherwise we might have remained at peace. Perhaps other factors would always arise pointing to war, and in direct self-protection war would be essential; but simply to see any vastly greater danger in the occupation of the Netherlands, than that in which we would be through the actual existence of an

enemy great power not far from the Channel, is to forget the power of the air.

The protection of France is urged in our own interests. But surely our own defensive interests should not always include the defence of France; the two are not synonymous, although some might think it an advantage if they were. Purely tactical and strategical considerations seem only too often to be mixed with democratic sentiment. It is held that France and Britain must stand together, to save democracy, our democracy, from being swamped by mid-European boulangism. The mistake is made not only of considering France a worthy democracy, but of fearing and resenting two dictatorships which have been great enough to rejuvenate the peoples for whom and by whom they exist. The supporters of the democratic principle seem afraid that if France and French institutions suffer at the hands of an enemy, we and ours must too. They seem to forget not only the real state of France, but the position of Britain—an independent Great Power, every day growing stronger and more able to rely on herself. And they seem to forget, too, that if they must unite with some other democratic country, there is the most powerful democracy in the world—speaking a queer form of English—on the other side of the Atlantic.

It is hard, very hard, to define the difference between the instance when our interests would coincide with those of France and when they would not. Only when the lives of the two countries are patently and beyond doubt at the mercy of the same danger, would it seem right to fight on the occasion of France being invaded. Simply to see our interests as greater than they need be, and more directly affected than they are, is to think lightly of war. Only on the utmost provocation should it seem right to send troops across the Channel and fight again on France's soil. Too much, far too much, is spoken care-

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lessly of our interests being involved between France and Germany, of our frontier—even though a double-sided one—being on the Rhine. For modern war is a supreme undertaking, and no man knows where it may lead. Let it not be started light-heartedly.

It is well said that Britain would never again fight where her interests were not directly concerned. That perhaps is why even the archangel of the League failed in the day of judgment. But it is for that all the more true; and it may seem strange for me to try to differentiate one type of interest from another and say ‘For this I would fight willingly, for that I would not.’ But the differentiation is simple enough. One side seems too obvious to be termed an ‘interest’ at all—that of pure self-defence. For the differentiation is that Britain’s ‘interests’ are not the same things as her defence. For her interests not one drop of blood should be spilt of any man unwilling to fight for them; and I should be unwilling. For the back-to-the-wall defence of Britain and the Empire every man’s blood should flow free; only then would I willingly give a gift which can go only once. Britain’s interests are things to further, to safeguard, to nurse by every means except the greatest one of all; her defence is that for which only this final effort is enough. Her interests are the furtherance of her trade, the maintenance of her prestige, the expansion of her influence and the safety of her citizens abroad; her defence is simply the protection of what she has within herself.

There are two aims which British foreign policy pursues. And when the Foreign Secretary spoke in November, 1936, of arms being borne to the defence of Germany against ‘unprovoked aggression,’ should a Western Pact be signed, he was thinking of the second. The defence of Belgium he thought of as belonging to the first—I think perhaps mistakenly.

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Britain pursues on the one hand her own interests, partly towards her self-protection, and on the other, the general cause of peace. The former we have seen should only lead to war in part. The latter makes of war a mad paradox. The former is vital and must be the most important; the latter is mostly quixotic. If war is only to be used for half the former, it should be out of the question for the latter. To fight for Germany—or even France—under a Western Pact would be going to war for the sake of peace. It would be foundering on the rock which sank the League: and it would be fighting where Britain's defence was not concerned.

That I would not do willingly.

Maybe then our work for peace is hollow. If we will not implement it with force, it would seem to be valueless. All the high optimism, all the grand promises, all the fine dreams, all these are useless, it would seem, if behind them all there were no ultimate proof of sincerity. But they surely need not stand by the proof of war. War is no instrument of peace. And if, without war, nations will not yet abide by established peace—then the general principle of peace must be sacrificed.

For the world is like that. Not yet is the time for a rule of goodwill; all the League of Nations has done—and it is indeed a miracle—is to pave the way for future Leagues. In the dim future the vision of universal peace appears; towards it the first League of Nations will have been a huge stride—but only one of many. For, after all, if ideals are never attempted, if a first failure is not undergone, the ultimate goal may seem too easy and be undeserved.

Now it may well be asked how, in the expectation of conscription, when Britain's government sends Britain to war, any personal attitude to fighting may be of any avail: and indeed why it should matter for anyone to hold any view at all concerning the occasion in which he

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would or would not fight willingly. And in a sense the answer to this line of questioning may well be that there is no practical purpose served by saying that one would only fight willingly in self-defence—seeing that one will probably be forced to fight, whatever one’s personal convictions; and even that one cannot in any case be sufficiently capable of judging what situation demands a war of self-defence and what does not.

But to this answer I would append one thing. Even if we conceive of the State as being greater than the individual—in every sense—the government of the State must still rest in this country on public opinion, in whatever form that opinion may find its expression in the future. Public opinion, being composed of a mass of individual opinions, should depend on the individual knowing the circumstances of any situation, and being capable of judging them. In spite, therefore, of the steam-roller of the government, of conscription being employed after the outbreak of war to finance the war with men, large-scale resistance in peace time to any government which might appear likely to draw Britain into an unnecessary major war, should end in the overthrow of such a government and the maintenance of peace—except in the last resort, the case of an attack upon ourselves.

So every opinion about war is worth holding, since we may all be sure that others hold opinions too. And in declaring that I would only fight—so long as I had full control of my own actions—in the extreme case of Britain or the British Empire being genuinely attacked, I can feel confident that I would be able to implement my declaration should other people feel the same. The possibility—and, I venture to say, likelihood—of this view being implemented, owing to the political atmosphere of the country, makes it fully worth while holding. In the event, however, of war coming to Britain, a hideous, modern

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European war, arising out of some distant event in Vienna, Prague, or other completely foreign sideshow, the whole nation would need to turn to arms. And I and the millions—we should not be able individually to help ourselves, but would have to serve, mustering what empty joy we could. That I should do. But full willingness would not be there.

It is right certainly that the State should compel its citizens, once it has embarked on such a course that only a full-scale national effort can carry it through. The mischief having been done, a war having been started, every effort would have to be made to fight it out to victory. Every hand would be needed; the war would perhaps have developed into a war of self-defence. For, once provoked, the enemy would naturally seize any opportunity of attacking British lands. And indeed, if a war started in some distant part of the world, not even closely connected with some part of the Empire, it might soon develop into a struggle which seriously menaced Britain and her lands. In such a case its whole character would have altered; instead of being a war in which Britain might be concerned for her interests, it would have become a war for her very self-defence.

If this happened—and it probably would—I would have been forced into the position of fighting willingly. War would have become the duty of those who reserve their willingness to fight only for times of national danger.

The opposite extreme may also well be put forward. It may be asked why such a loathing of war should not promote full-scale Pacifism; that might seem to be a more logical attitude than a reserved support of war. But this is to miss the element of reality; it is like supporting the principle of Free Trade in practice when nearly every other country in the world has a high tariff wall. For if other nations are prepared to use war as an instrument of

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policy, we too must be ready for war. If modern civilization still thinks, in a primitive way, of force, then anyone who would be safe within that civilization must be able to think in terms of force too. For force is stronger than thought or learning.

If this is realized, as it must be, then out and out Pacifism can mean only one thing—a complete disregard of national possessions, of national customs, of national ways of life. And although nationalism is frowned on to-day for the vigour of its resurgence, the international community, the unity of the whole world, is still as distant an ideal as the League of Nations—of which indeed it is a premise. Great things still exist nationally: to be protected by individual nations.

And in Britain, I think, we have as much as any nation. We have in any case things which we ourselves should value more than the possessions of others, since they are the makings of our own hands and our own minds.

These things, indeed, are not ours alone. They were made by the past; they belong to the future, as well as the present. They are not things which we have—which I have—through our own exertions. Much, nay most, that I enjoy and benefit from, was created by those who went before me. It is not simply mine to destroy or hand on as I please. For Britain is a great trust, to go from one generation to the next. The State lives: and I pass.

I admire, value and love these possessions of ours. They are to be full worthy of preservation. I believe, too, in our ability and duty to protect and preserve them. I believe it is well that they are ours: and I believe it is wrong to let them go.

Surely when you balance like this two things, an ideal and a thing of great price—the ideal of peace against the protection of Britain by war—whichever course you choose, you must sacrifice something. I prefer to sacrifice

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peace. In any other case I would abandon everything for the sake of peace; but when peace is incompatible with the safeguarding of the country, peace must go. I resent and regret that such should be the choice. But so long as it is—and it will not be for ever, we hope—the foulness of war shall be chosen.



*'PACIFISM OR POISON-GAS?'*

E. RUSSELL BENTLEY

Age 21—Abandoned the idea of a musical career after being elected Licentiate of the Guildhall School of Music at the age of 16—Entered University College, Oxford, in 1935 with an Exhibition in History—First Chairman of the O.U. Pacifist Association—Joined the Peace Pledge Union August 1936, and the Independent Labour Party, September 1937.



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‘The propagation of Pacifism is like using blasphemy.’

MR. A. R. WISE, M.P. for Smethwick.

‘It is indeed a new doctrine in this country that it is wrong to be a soldier and those who preach it should be denounced. Pacifists are more dangerous than poison-gas.’

MR. DUFF COOPER, April, 1936.

‘The use of force, of the sword, is the ministry of God.’

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, May, 1936.

WHEN I came up to Oxford in 1935 I had fewer opinions than I have now. Straightaway I joined the Labour Club and looked to it for some measure of guidance. Never at any time have I struggled with the problem of Pacifism in isolation. I have always regarded it as a means to the Good Life: more especially, as a means to the Socialist society.<sup>1</sup>

In 1935, however, neither the Labour Club nor myself thought much about the question of Pacifism, though I remember hearing Mr. G. D. H. Cole declare he was probably a Pacifist—but Franco’s rebellion soon changed that. My next memory is of eager discussion about economic and military sanctions: and the Italo-Abyssinian war first brought home to me that allegiance to the Covenant of the League might make rearmament a necessity; might lead to yet another war ‘to make the world safe for peace and democracy.’

Professor Joad tells me that at the time when he spoke

<sup>1</sup>Conservative readers may ask why I never considered Conservatism. I did. The *Sunday Times* played its part in making me a Socialist. So, in a lesser way, did the writings of Burke, Disraeli and Earl Baldwin.

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in favour of the Oxford Union's famous King and Country motion, nobody realized that the Pacifists and the supporters of Collective Security were two classes and not one, much less that within three years they would be opponents. Mr. Beverley Nichols' book *Cry Havoc* belongs to the same period. Mr. Nichols spends most of his time persuading you to refuse to fight and advocating unilateral disarmament; then at the end he tells you in a rather troubled, shamefaced sort of way that he would fight in an unterritorial army. Where this army for which Mr. Nichols wanted to fight was to be recruited from, if League Powers like Britain and France were to disarm, we were not told.

The Labour Movement in relation to the problems of war and peace now began to disintegrate into three parts. Some like Dr. Dalton and Mr. Citrine and the Trades Union leadership as a whole wish to support the National Government's rearmament unconditionally: others such as Mr. Pritt, Mr. Noel Baker, Mr. Strauss and the more literate members generally, were willing to support rearmament, subject to conditions which in their eyes would ensure that these arms were used to further a League policy and not a policy of Hailsham, Londonderry and Simon League betrayal: others like Lord Ponsonby and Dr. Salter and Mr. George Lansbury joined the Peace Pledge Union.

Such was the situation in the middle of 1936. I was not certain what to do. I read Marx and Lenin and Tolstoy and de Ligt; also the League's apologists. And at the end of it all I joined the Peace Pledge Union in a mood neither of despair nor elation. I joined it soberly because I thought it the most reasonable line of action I could take—or more probably the least foolish one.

The dominant sections of the Trades Union and Labour Party leadership now became increasingly bellicose. By

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'bellicose' I do not mean that Labour politicians clamoured for war as did Clynes and Robert Blatchford in 1914. I mean that one could begin to discern the usual symptoms of war psychosis. Mr. Attlee and the Parliamentary Labour Party had demanded sanctions against Italy: they had opposed the withdrawal of economic sanctions and demanded military sanctions if such were found to be necessary to make Mussolini desist from his invasion. These symptoms of 'the new jingoism' were strange and new to me. I had read poems and speeches which exalted the conception of the hired uniformed murderer. (And I had read Shelley's reply: 'Man has no right to kill his brother. It is no excuse that he does it in uniform; he only adds the infamy of servitude to the crime of murder.') But not till this time had I attended meetings where 'our comrades in arms,' 'our Spanish brothers,' were hailed as the defenders of culture and civilization, 'our bulwarks against Fascism.' I had learned from the history books at school that all preceding generations had been duped at one time or another into believing that 'the other side' in war is always devilish, always tyrannous: and that 'our side' is not. I had learned all these things. But not until 1936 did I realize that my own generation could be coaxed into the same mistake as easily as all the others had been: and every time the new slogans were shouted ('against Fascism and War,' 'for Collective Security'), every time the word 'security' passed my lips, I felt less secure.

I am one of those people who believe that ignorance of military technique, ignorance of the elementary workshop realities of rearmament, has led the Labour Party badly astray. Mr. R. H. S. Crossman, I am told, accuses Pacifists of thinking nothing worth fighting for. A curious error. The phrase 'something worth fighting for' means very little. Men fight in order to PRESERVE something.

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Under modern conditions of warfare the 'victor' is likely to win nothing, preserve nothing and lose everything. In former days A conquered B and the result was a new state  $A + B$  which was something grander and more powerful than the old entities A and B. To-day, A attacks B, and if A and B both possess unlimited power to ravage and destroy—as do all the Great Powers—the result is merely the exhaustion and ruin of both A and B. Once war was only a crime: to-day it has become an absurdity.

Why, then, does Mr. Crossman attack Pacifism? None of the ardour of a Bernhardt or a Yeats-Brown burns in his veins; not for him those moments of martial ecstasy that make of death an orgasm. Then why? Because, I think, he is misled by the wars in Abyssinia and Spain, where the most terrible resources of gas and the incendiary and explosive bomb have not yet been exploited. The population of this country could be so decimated by (e.g.) Germany, that no government but a government of soldiers would be in a position to rule it. Even if we 'won' a war for democracy and socialism, militarism would be enthroned. Is this 'worth fighting for'?

War is, therefore, itself a concession to Fascism. There is simply no point in opposing the Fascists if by so doing you enforce their creed upon yourself. Unfortunately for us Socialists, modern war is not like police-work. The policeman's method is that of precision. He narrows down his victims as nearly as possible to the guilty parties. The policeman discriminates, but war is indiscriminate. For the sake of destroying Hitler, Goering, Goebbels and a few dozen interested capitalists, Mr. Crossman, if he adopted the war-method, would have to kill millions of German miners, bank clerks, tram-drivers and school-masters, and would be quite unable to prevent a similar treatment being meted out to his own people. Socialists used to be classed collectively as 'advanced,' but now

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most of them are thinking in terms of to-morrow’s politics and yesterday’s arms.

Left-Wing militarism is one of the most insidious dangers in modern Oxford. Young men to-day seem to want to take refuge in the group; to leave their troubles behind, while they wave the banner and beat the drum. The end of life is (in their eyes) a ‘thrill.’ They seem unusually thwarted and balked. Left-Wing militarism must, I fear, be considered in this context. The atmosphere of a meeting of the Oxford University Labour Club is like that of a Hitlerite display: the enthusiasm almost reaches frenzy. These snares the Pacifist can avoid.

Pacifists must not become idealists: so much that is mere irrelevant sentimentality is advanced by Pacifists to further their case that the whole cause becomes endangered. Mr. Bertrand Russell in his *Which Way to Peace?* puts the Pacifist case on firmer ground—namely, that if you are the sort of person who regards himself as a ‘realist,’ or a ‘practical man,’ contemptuous of all but the most brutal common sense, then you ought to be a Pacifist.

Mr. Russell, in effect, says—‘Back Pacifism and you are less likely to travel the road to a miserable and useless death, less likely to lose your material possessions, less likely to lose what vestiges of freedom and democracy still remain. The consequences of unilateral disarmament might be disastrous: but the path offers a glimmer of hope at least. There is no hope in the present rearmament. All past rearmament races have ended in war. On what grounds ought we to expect immunity this time? Even if there existed the will, no government (except possibly the Soviet Government) dare now advocate disarmament for fear of economic collapse. What hope is there in all this madness?’

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Mr. Russell treated the whole question as quantitative. Which policy would lead to most democracy, most freedom, most Socialism? Which policy would involve the least loss of life and happiness? With the utmost reluctance he came to the conclusion that the most appropriate policy was unilateral disarmament—if multilateral disarmament was an impossibility—and individual refusal to fight. His logic is, I think, unassailable and Lenin, who said ‘Those on whom falls the formidable task of raising humanity above the capitalist stage must be ready to try method after method until they find the one which best corresponds to their goal,’ had already pointed out the way for him.

There comes a time when violence only destroys—‘the more violence, the less revolution.’ My Socialist friends attack Pacifism with the aid of the Jewish persecutions in Germany, Mussolini’s conquest of Abyssinia, the capitulation of Danzig to the Nazi terror, the Japanese massacres over Shanghai and Nanking. I can only reply that we in Britain already now have a heavily-armed Government unhampered by Pacifist principles which uselessly stands by and does nothing, that if we had a Labour Government which aimed at using our armaments for the good of the world it could do nothing with them—so desperate is the situation now—but involve us in a world war not worth the winning. My Socialist friends tell me that world peace cannot be achieved without world Socialism—and violence may be necessary to achieve the latter. But war is different to-day from what it was in 1917 and the kind of Socialism which will emerge from violence in 1940 will not be of a kind recognizable by most Socialists to-day. The Utopians are not those who now oppose all kinds of armed violence and wish to do away with militarism and war at once. They are those who accept certain kinds ‘for the time being’ in the hope of abolishing these scourges later on.



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As Dr. Clara Meijer-Wichmann wrote long ago: By this acceptance for the time being, Utopians 'accept military organization with its mechanical restraint and imposed discipline, war industries, espionage and all the ruses and lies of warfare, the appeal to brutal instincts and anti-social passions and even bloody slaughter itself—all phenomena and tendencies which only perpetuate war. So that, having got beyond the present stage of militarism and war, they will one day have to combat them in the same way as the War Resisters are doing already. Unless we wish to prolong the fight for peace indefinitely, it is to-day and without waste of time that we must wage the *complete* war upon war.'

When a Pacifist mentions the inevitable horrors that must accompany any future war and suggests that no cause can justify them, he is labelled 'defeatist.' When he ventures to discuss a society in which war has been abolished, he is mocked at as a visionary. I believe I am neither of these things. My common sense (I flatter myself) made me a Pacifist, for I believed, and still believe, that the international outlook is so dark that we are faced by a choice between several unpleasant courses of action. I believe unilateral disarmament and individual refusal to bear arms is the least unpleasant (though still unpleasant) of all the courses of action still open to us. For the 'just war' is a theory of the past. The consequences of non-resistance are nowadays likely to be less terrible than those of retaliation or 'defence.' The advance in technique has led to a situation in which Pacifist becomes not picturesque but imperative. And not all the oratory in the world can now disguise the fact that when we talk of 'the Covenant' or 'a League of peace-loving Powers' we merely mean Britain and France and Russia allied against Japan, Italy and Germany.

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Consider the immediate future. In this country the National Government looks to be firmly entrenched for some years yet. Mr. Cole has shown that if Labour is to win a majority, it must win all seats at present held by the National Government with a majority of 6,000 votes or less—and must at the same time hold every one of the constituencies it holds at present: or alternatively, the Labour Party must win two-thirds of all the seats at present with a National majority of 10,000 or less—again without losing a single one it now holds. In my opinion, therefore, it is the National Government which will control foreign policy for years to come. The harsh figures of bye-elections prevent anyone from placing his trust in the Labour Party as an instrument for the banishment of war—at any rate as an instrument able to be utilized during the next five years or so. Obviously, therefore, we have to turn to other possible sources of salvation.

Is the Pacifist movement as helpless as the Labour Movement? Frankly, I think I ought to answer—‘Nearly, but not quite.’ How unsatisfactory! How irritating to undergraduate Oxford which likes above all things a short cut to Certainty! But why the ‘not quite’? Where even the slightest hope? It lies in this, I think: that, though it is not to be expected that a majority of our countrymen will be converted to Pacifism in the next few years, fortunately Pacifists can influence the political situation whilst still in a minority. A nation united is the first essential of modern military action. No government faced with a few million citizens who had in advance pledged themselves never to fight dare go to war. The Peace Pledge Union has this chance of saving Britain from disaster. The Labour Party—thanks to the policy of its leaders—no longer has any chance whatever.

But mere negation or avoidance of war are worth little in themselves and the real contribution of the Peace

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Pledge Union lies in its positive peace policy. Let me say here that those opponents of Pacifism who beat the air with the remark ‘There are things more valuable than life, things worth dying for,’ do not understand Pacifism. I most sincerely do believe there are things worth dying for. I do not believe the world exists for me. The question which anti-Pacifists should be called upon to answer is ‘Are these things worth killing for?’ Even if they answer ‘Yes’ to this: even if they justify a little judicious death for a noble cause, they have still to be asked whether they are prepared to go to the lengths of torturing and killing millions for that Cause. More important, will this Cause itself flourish on the blood of babes and the destruction of civilization? Those who have abandoned war now that defence means (in the main) retaliation, will look to the positive and creative aspects of Pacifism. I do not believe in sloth and slavery. I think a people ought to overthrow a bad government. I think a people *can* overthrow a bad government without carnage.

Apply all this to the question of armed invasion. With all the moral censures on the criminality of unprovoked aggression, I, of course, agree. But I believe that to abstain from ARMED AND VIOLENT resistance is more expedient, will cause less suffering, and in the end prove more successful. WHAT MORE HORRIBLE THINGS COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO NANKING THAN ACTUALLY DID? This question must be answered by all who oppose Pacifism. I have not heard it answered yet, though I have asked it many times. Nor has Richard Gregg’s book on the technique of pacific resistance been answered from the other side.

To Richard Gregg in his book *The Power of Non-Violence* must go the credit of first elucidating the Pacifist theories of non-violent resistance. He maintains that if you are invaded, you can (a) hit back with bombs and bullets, (b) give in completely, (c) resist by all humane means:

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and the P.P.U. advocates the use of the third alternative. Furthermore, we believe that 'humane means' in the hands of those rigorously trained in Pacifist technique must prove successful. For we Pacifists believe that the majority of men are too timid, too conformist and submit far too readily to invasion once war is done: they discover too quickly that the invaders are 'good colonists.' The greatest menace to peace and security and the good life is not the savage but the yes-man. I am prepared to say that the real danger of a Nazi invasion of Britain would not be that Hitler would reproduce his totemism here, but that our patriots would too easily transfer their loyalty and patriotism to their new master. Before the world can achieve peace it must train itself for peace: this would not be difficult if as much money and thought were devoted to peace as has been devoted to rearmament and war preparations during the last few years. If the individual were trained to be a Pacifist as assiduously as he is trained to be a murderer, we might yet abolish war. It is not a matter of training Man to be less savage, less sadistic, but to be less ignorant, less frustrated and more courageous. I cannot yet believe even in my worst moments of despair that man is so incorrigible, so stupid, that he will consent to his own annihilation rather than adapt himself to new circumstances: and in the circumstances of to-day Pacifism is the only way of keeping the human race in being—in Western Europe at least: so that we Pacifists claim that Pacifism is at once a way of life for the individual and the only public policy capable of preserving our civilization. If technology advances at the present rate, it will be possible in time to eliminate all life on this planet. Anti-Pacifists propose to do little to prevent this. Pacifists are the true conservatives. It is they who stand for the continuity of civilization. They repudiate every policy that might reduce Europe or the world

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to ruin. Nor are our views new-fangled. Duff Cooper says it is 'a new doctrine in this country that it is wrong to be a soldier.' But members of the Society of Friends have been in this country a long time. Outside this country, the belief is found in all ages. Lactatius declared sixteen hundred years ago: 'it will be unlawful for a Christian to be a soldier.'

So far as the Churches are concerned, I know that the late Dick Sheppard hoped that his creed would gain great strength from them. Yet even if we agree that archbishops who merely regard themselves as part of the State Civil Service are not representative of the CHRISTIAN clergy proper, still the attitude of the 'Christian' leaders is an amazing one.

What would be the attitude of the archbishops if Hitler and Mussolini issued a joint statement proclaiming their intention to disarm to-morrow and never to take human life in any circumstances? The archbishops would say—'Let us give thanks that the rulers of two of Europe's greatest countries have called their people back to the ways of Christianity. Christ has prevailed.' The archbishops know as well as you or I what is the Christian thing to do and what is not—but their tribal instincts are so strong that they will not help to lead the world to sanity. Sometimes, indeed, if it is convenient they spurn or deride the Christian way when advocated by others. So far as I know, no support was forthcoming from the English Churches for the detailed plans for complete world disarmament thrice advocated by the Soviet Government at Geneva.

On the other hand it did not take the archbishops long to come to the rescue of the recruiting campaign. No Nazi prelates ever responded with such alacrity. Miraculously, their campaign for the 'Recall to Religion' with its

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emphasis on 'citizenship' and 'duty to the State' corresponded with a feverish increase in preparations—material and moral—for war. Dr. Temple has made some very pretty debating points, but in my judgment he can be answered by the simplest of us. For what does he condemn the Peace Pledge Union? Because he, Dr. Temple, believes that it is sometimes justifiable to take human life. But Mr. Bertrand Russell believes that it is sometimes justifiable to take human life and Mr. Bertrand Russell is a sponsor of the Peace Pledge Union. Why then is Dr. Temple not a sponsor of the P.P.U.? Plainly because he thinks that Pacifists accept the Tolstoian position that killing is never justified. Dr. Temple thinks killing is justified to-day if by it you are likely to preserve European Civilization, the League, the Anglican Church and so forth. If it so happens that by fighting you are *unlikely* to preserve these things, Dr. Temple must oppose fighting.

Dr. Temple is refuted by military facts; the kind of war he justifies can never occur. How do I know this? Brush aside, if you choose, the work of Captain Philip Mumford and the late General Crozier, for, it is true, they were Pacifists. (They became Pacifists because of their experiences in the Royal Air Force and the British Army respectively: that in itself is an argument.) Read, instead, the work of Air-Commodore Charlton. Finally, I hope there is no need to quote Earl Baldwin's remarks about the bomber. Everyone knows what has happened in Nanking, and earlier in Guernica. Then why do our clerics still repeat the old formulas, still gesticulate in the same old way? 'The use of force, of the sword, is the ministry of God, for the defence of the people.' What does Dr. Lang mean? 'Force' may be the abstract 'compulsion' or anything concrete from kicking a football to bombing London. Now it is true that the German people will be

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‘defended’ from the English people, if the English people is annihilated. But in what sense is this annihilation the ‘ministry of God’? Next, the word ‘sword.’ Asquith, I think, called the declaration of war in 1914 ‘the unsheathing of the sword’ and peace was to him ‘sheathing it.’ These graceful gestures are, however, irrelevant. If orators continue to use these emotional flourishes, they must be laughed to scorn. If ‘sword’ still retains exciting overtones, it must be robbed of them by knowledge of reality. Ignorance and superstition are our chief enemies. Most of us, I fancy, need to make some such attempt at an integration of our thought as Mr. Aldous Huxley makes in *Ends and Means*. ‘Civilization is an appreciation of values gained by an accumulation of experience.’

I joined the I.L.P. some time after joining the P.P.U. because it is the only British party which, having as its aim the creation of a Socialist society, nevertheless is not bound to the myths of Geneva and the Covenant. All members of the I.L.P. are not Pacifists: but their foreign policy approximates very nearly to that of the P.P.U. I know when I joined the party that to many the I.L.P. was just a bad joke and to many others just a bad smell. But I couldn’t help that. The I.L.P. offered real prospects. I could not be disconcerted by a hasty and highbrow contempt for it. I have never been content with an unpolitical Pacifism and I am beginning to think that Pacifism in this country will not become an important political force until the majority of Pacifists are members of the I.L.P.

All parties, all politicians, all men, say they do not desire war. Of course not—except that one particular war which serves their turn. Socialists will not fight for King and Empire, nor Imperialists for the workers of the world, nor capitalists for anything but wealth and power.

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But each group makes an exception of *one* war which, in its opinion, is legitimate. So, as Mr. Huxley says, although all decry war, everybody is the potential victim of somebody else's exceptionally permissible war. Only we Pacifists have broken free from this insanity. Nobody *wants* to be a Pacifist: but just as I found Pacifism less stupid, less unacceptable than other creeds, so you may not like it, but you may, if you are honest with yourself, feel compelled to embrace it. You may have to choose between Pacifism and poison-gas.

And now you know why I for one will not fight.



*'WAR IS WRONG—SO WHAT?'*

KEITH BRIANT

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**B**Y far the most popular post-war cry is ‘We want Peace.’ A popular and convenient cry, it is regularly used by tactful statesmen of all nations. The Hitlers and Mussolinis also find it logical bravely to extol war as the ultimate achievement of mankind, and it must be admitted that we as a nation are uncivilized, because we cannot appreciate the truth that killing brings out the best in us. But the interesting question is ‘How far is the “We want Peace” bunk believed to-day?’

Possibly some may resent the use of the vulgar, expressive little word ‘bunk’ in this context. Yet it is justified. Obviously everyone does not want peace and everyone does not believe that everyone else only wants peace, or the statesmen who use the ‘We want Peace’ cry—which is politely echoed on all sides—would not all be arming their countries as quickly as possible.

The intelligence of the peoples of the world is insulted every time this catch-phrase is used. Via its minority mouthpieces, Japan asserts that it ‘wants Peace’ and then slaughters the Chinese, who show no desire to molest their neighbours. Why? Because the rulers of Japan ‘want Peace.’ Mussolini wants peace—so he fakes some frontier incidents and then sends his soldiers to march behind native troops while the latter kill the Abyssinians. Then numbers of the peaceful Italian soldiers return home in triumph, having manifested their country’s hatred of war.

But surely Great Britain ‘wants Peace’? I am certain that Britain wants peace. The anxiety of British statesmen ever since Britain got as much as she now holds has,

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sensibly enough, been to maintain the *status quo*. Therefore Britain, who for centuries has waged wars here, there—and everywhere in fact where there was something to be gained by successful slaughter—now realizes that war is immoral and stupid.

But Britain has been justified in waging wars on the continent of Europe—and in other continents—in the past, because she has always been in the right. We are the nation which has been chosen by God always to be right, and a nation ordained to disseminate the principles of Faith, Hope and Charity to peoples who occasionally have been misled by the Devil into believing that we were not completely altruistic. Yet the British interpretation of history—that it has always hurt us more than it hurt our enemies—is not always believed.

Other nations are not so firmly Christian as we are. Once one is definitely Christian, war ceases to be as evil as it seems to appear to some misguided non-Christians, who fail to understand that when, for example, the bishops told our soldiers during the last war that God liked Britons killing as many Germans as possible, the bishops had definitely been in touch with the Almighty.

War is a fine-sounding little word. But its sound is misleading. The word 'War' should convey such characteristics as spite, envy, malice, beastliness, pettiness. War never was anything to be proud of. To-day, successful war is based upon calculated cowardice. The cardinal principle for success is now authoritatively declared to consist in inflicting as heavy, unexpected slaughter on the enemy as possible, before he is prepared to do the same to you. In fact, nothing which anyone with any decency could conceivably feel proud to do, or to see his own country doing—if he has any patriotism.

Patriotism is another example of the perversions with which my generation finds itself confronted. Patriotism

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is still generally taken to mean being prepared to commit the most horrible acts and to descend to the meanest deeds in order that your country shall come out on top. Whereas the finest patriot would refuse to commit similar acts in order to help his dearest relations in an emergency, knowing that they would feel disgraced by them—when the ‘honour’ of his country is at stake there is nothing, apparently, that he can do which can defile it.

Whichever way one looks at the ‘Would I Fight?’ problem from the point of view of those who grew up in the shadow of the Great War, one is brought back to the same point. A new philosophy on the ethics of killing—or not killing—for one’s country, is needed. The days are past when people could blind themselves to the truth that their country was—more often than not—squandering human lives in an ‘honourable’ war for dishonourable causes. The old catch-phrases of ‘Honour,’ ‘Dying for one’s King and Country’; symbolisms such as ‘The British Lion,’ ‘Empires on which the sun never sets’—all these phrases, so convenient and so specious, which have so long contrived to prevent people from contact with reality—are all wearing thin.

If one looks at the kind of wars in which we have sacrificed lives in the past, can one honestly say that the majority were fought for motives for which, if there is a God, one can believe that He would wish His gift of life to be sacrificed? Or does one find that, the act of killing being intrinsically degrading, the causes for which we and other nations have killed have been equally base—that cupidity, ambition, pride, fear, etc., have been the guiding principles that have moved us to war?

How many wars have we fought knowing that we stood to gain nothing from them, but which we waged because we felt that an ideal should be upheld? As we search the pages of history we certainly find the ideal first—loudly

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enunciated and heavily underlined by the politicians of the day—but too closely underlying the ideal is there not to be found a rival nation which has grown too strong, an interest threatened, an alliance jeopardized?

There is no need to analyse the causes of war and to expose the shams which are inevitably practised by the rulers of the belligerent nations before their nation is sufficiently doped into hysterical activity, which are practised during each war to keep the nation doped into hating people like themselves whom they don't know; and which after the war are put over by the victorious or defeated statesmen, either to lull the conscience or to keep resentment alive for the next war. All this has been done so often and so much better by wiser and more experienced brains than my own, that it would be an impertinence on my part, and a waste of the reader's time, to do so.

What I can legitimately try to do is to state my own reaction to a possible war declared to-morrow, and where I believe that my reaction is not held by others of my age, to say so.

Intentionally or unintentionally—I am prepared to give the benefit of the doubt, although I am not sure that I am right in doing so—I was brought up to believe that war was somehow rather a fine thing. We were fed on wars in our history books, always they tended to some ultimate good, an inferior people was conquered and then we governed them so much better—apparently for the love of doing so—that it really didn't matter how many lives and how many homes were shattered in the process. Everything was so grandly impersonal. One was never given a glimpse of the flesh and blood that suffered in order that those pages might be written and that this country or that might paint the map this or that colour, might add to its wealth and give its people and monarch a further sop to their national pride.

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Splendid figures strode through these pages at the head of heroic armies, occasionally it was noted that in the Battle of X so many lives were lost, but never were there any historical problems based on the personal issues emerging from the bloodshed.

One came to regard it as natural that the different peoples of the world should not be content to live, practising the arts of civilization and fulfilling the purpose of mankind. It was natural that they should leave their own country periodically, and kill members of another country, because their statesmen said that ‘the balance of power’ was being upset or that if they didn’t crush their neighbours, it would only be a matter of time before their neighbours crushed them.

It was all somehow inevitable—a divine law—and the philosophy of the world’s statesmen, that they must always be trying to go one better than their opposite numbers, was accepted by the millions of peace-loving people, who took it for granted that the people of the ‘threatening nation’ were quite different, and loved blood and death rather than peaceful, constructive lives.

One grew up to believe that in some odd way one was fulfilling God’s purpose and doing a noble work for the Ideal, which was, of course, ever present in the minds of our politicians, when the latter decided that the drastic step of war must be taken and one took up arms for one’s country.

When one grew older one learnt that all this was bunk. That war was a purely practical business fought for mercenary reasons and that when it was fought by mercenary armies it was fought by appropriate persons. Despite the efforts of the international lawyers, nations are permitted to be amoral and to further their greed by means which in private life it has been found impossible to permit ambitious citizens to practise. One nation may

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believe that its principles of government are more 'Christian' or more humanitarian than those of its rivals, and that it is therefore justified in governing as much of the world's surface as possible, but this is obviously an impractical and dangerous argument and the ultimate reason for that nation going to war must be because its £ s. d. is threatened by a nation with less.

If one is honest with oneself, when the call to war comes one will always find underneath the stated 'honourable' cause a practical, mercenary reason why one's 'country' has taken umbrage (actually only a handful of individuals ever know that there is any umbrage to be taken). A victorious Germany would have been 'impossible' for our statesmen to cope with in 1914, and as our politicians have admitted in quieter times, our pledge to 'gallant little Belgium' provided exactly the right stimulus to goad the British people into slaughter. If our sacred bond had not been at stake another reason for siding against Germany would have been found—as in similar circumstances it always will be. In that phrase 'in similar circumstances' lies the whole 'Would I Fight?' problem as I—and many like myself—see it.

I lay no claim to being a Conservative, a Liberal, a Communist or a Socialist—or, in fact, an adherent to any particular political party. I believe that all parties have their moments of wisdom and of folly. But I must admit that I fail to see how, with the greater part of the earth's surface divided among jealous, predatory, capitalist nations, there will not always be 'similar circumstances' when the 'have not' nations decide that they will have a shot at seizing some of the markets of the more successful 'haves.' When, within very broad limits, it is within the power of a handful of individuals in each country so to juggle with industrial concerns that they embarrass or ruin the incomes of the many, when there is no real



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organization and no redistribution of capital profits in each country as and when they are required, when the world is largely broken up into a number of squabbling, striving little capitalist units each breaking up into infinite uncontrolled subdivisions, when fresh markets are even allowed to be exploited in the interests of the lifetime of the exploiter so that his successor finds that they have been equipped against himself, when Finance Ministers themselves contradict each other as to the causes of world slump and how currencies should be readjusted, how can economics not persistently precipitate world conflicts in which more and more lives will be sacrificed on the altar of nationalist pride and capitalist obstinacy and greed?

Here, of course, is one of the biggest—if not the biggest—problem of human affairs that confronts the human race at the present time. The whole issue—which is an intensely practical one affecting the very life as well as the welfare of the man in every street in every country, is outside the competency of this essay—as well as outside the ability of the writer—to discuss. I only present the broad issue to show how the problem appears to me, and to assert that the problem of Empires here and Empires there, of Empires that exist and Empires that ambitious statesmen are endeavouring to erect, of declining markets, expanding markets and coveted markets, is for me—and I believe for a considerable number of other young men who look at the causes of past wars and the causes that seem to be emerging for future wars—an intensely depressing one, the solution of which is not apparent in the present organization of the greater part of the earth’s surface.

What we want—if we are going to persuade ourselves that to destroy human life is a creditable as well as a justifiable act—is to find a cause which can fairly claim to advance human progress as well as the interests of the

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particular community grouping to which we happen to belong by an accident of birth.

I think that I can fairly say that I have as keen a love of the country in which I was born, and as keen an admiration and respect for its great men whose lives have benefited the human race, as any young man of my own age. But I realize that other young men in other countries have just as strong and as genuine a love of their country, and all the constructive things it has given the world, as myself. And, quite literally, I feel that I am damned if I participate in a successful butchery of them to keep my country richer than theirs.

In the twentieth century, which lays some claim to civilization, politicians cannot expect anyone with any intelligence or sensibility to acquiesce in a squandering of all that previous centuries have painfully attained, simply because we insist, through reasons of pride or greed, in sitting on our fortunate perch, and refuse to recognize that the material sources of the world are one large mess of pottage to which all human beings are equally entitled, whatever their claims of priority.

It is the politician's job so to mediate among the nations that none can fairly rouse their country's indignation to fighting pitch by truthfully pointing out that their country is receiving an unfair deal. To-day, such arguments as this are dismissed as 'impractical' and 'hopelessly idealistic' because the politician has succeeded in persuading his people that he is entitled to admit failure, and therefore to resort to the defeatist solution of war, because 'circumstances are so difficult.' In no other occupation, however difficult the position, is such a plea admitted. Why then is the politician allowed to get away with it?

In this country we feel a certain amount of sympathy when our politicians put forward this excuse for deadlock.

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But we tend to forget that although they certainly have an extraordinarily difficult Europe to handle, they had at Versailles—and during the immediate post-war years—the opportunity to lay the foundations of an enduring peace. Instead, they made it possible for a Hitler to turn the bitterness of a defeated Germany towards reconstruction on warlike lines—and we know not what. They laid the foundations of the crazy world in which we live to-day. After the world had burnt, they fiddled—and fiddled badly, like musicians who only know how to play a hackneyed tune and stumble when called upon to create a symphony.

To-day, we are faced with the position that the majority know that a war on the scale which the next war must be, can benefit neither victor nor vanquished and must leave both in a position a hundred times worse off than the worst off before the war. Yet we seem unable to check the insidious slide towards a Europe more heavily armed than in 1914, more suspicious, more military minded. We know that a future world conflict must be more terrible than the most appalling picture the most lurid imagination can paint, that it must plunge the world into a state beside which the so-called Dark Ages will seem an age of enlightenment; the leading thinkers of every country pour forth sane and balanced literature demonstrating the ultimate folly of modern warfare and proving that it profits no-one—yet we all re-arm, call for more manpower, and think and talk in terms of warfare which, if it ever was noble and chivalrous, certainly never can be again.

In face of all this, young men and young women are expected to maintain their ideals, their confidence in the sanity, decency and honour of their country and its governors, and to be ready coldbloodedly to kill in a war which they know can benefit neither their country, their

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elders, themselves, their children—let alone the progress of the human race. 'A mad world, my masters'? Mad is surely an under-estimation.

For this generation is fundamentally a serious one. The days are past when the heirs of families distinguished for their record of service to their country, clad in baby clothes, wheeled home drunken young women in perambulators at dawn. That was the reaction after the last war—part of its legacy of nobility and achievement. To-day, young men and young women are honestly pre-occupied with the part, however modest, that they can play in the progress of their country. And I believe that a substantial proportion have a very definite and somewhat uneasy conscience on this subject of war, and the part they may be called upon to play.

Many are prepared to overcome their scruples at taking life if they can feel that something constructive may result from the war their country wages. But this is not the only point at issue. They have seen the kind of world their fathers died to create. They are beginning to understand the real nature of the 'War to End War' and to know exactly what credence to give to politicians who attempt to stampede them with this and similar plausible cries. If, although they realize that the politicians' call to arms is inevitably a pack of specious lies, they are prepared to kill again, they must feel that in butchering for their country they are butchering for something worth butchering for.

I may be sentimental, but I refuse to carry sentimentality so far as to be roused to murder through my love of the charming contours of the British Isles or the memory of Shakespeare, Nelson, the Duke of Wellington and Chaucer. Before one decides that the crime of war—since whatever our 'Christian' prelates argue, I refuse to believe that I can bomb a man's guts out in the name of

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Christ—is justified, one must be satisfied that the social organization of the country whose existence one is fighting to preserve, is such that the majority are gaining from life sufficient to allow them fully to develop their potentialities.

This I cannot see happening in Britain to-day. Nor do I think that I am bigoted. A great deal of Socialist and Communist talk irritates me intensely. Not until many centuries have passed can I see the great mass of human creatures—whose ancestors have for centuries been degraded mentally and physically, becoming equal to those who have been given fuller development for an equal number of centuries. And I am prepared to admit the immense progress the last hundred years has seen in the living conditions of the ‘working’ class.

I would infinitely prefer to believe that only a very small minority are not leading full, happy lives to-day. That is a pleasant thought to go to sleep on. But I cannot honestly see how the most rosy politician or the most blind social worker can maintain that an unpleasantly large proportion of this nation is not living tragically near the bone, under-eating, and leading stunted, thwarted lives in humiliating and degrading conditions.

It is futile and damnable hypocrisy on the part of our governors to say, however moving and poignantly, ‘We know, but really we are doing all we can and things are very much better than they used to be, in a hundred years time everyone may have all the things civilization can now produce, but to-day we don’t quite see how to do it.’

Food is wasted, cargoes rot in order to maintain prices and profits—and we now see that when the politicians wish they can squeeze huge sums out of the Exchequer. When the safety of the country seems to be threatened, millions can be set aside in order to create more and more

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efficient methods of destroying life. But to relieve human want and the sore spots which disgrace this country and make our 'civilization' a dirty mockery—such large sums are impossible. Yet Miss Ellen Wilkinson will tell you, giving concrete instances if you feel that she is letting her imagination run riot, that even young men and young women are dying in her constituency from what began as simple colds and from which others with good food, warmth and decent living conditions can recover in a fortnight.

In the heart of respectable middle-class London one can stumble upon shameful slums, a film recently showed damning pictures of tragically overcrowded rooms with cracked walls upon which vermin crawled, two national newspapers lately published pictures of their wretched occupants. Such black spots are decreasing, but too many still exist which could be swept away before it is too late for one generation. It is criminal to talk of things 'gradually improving.' In the meanwhile people grow old, suffer and die without ever having had from life the things which the advances of science have now made possible for all. That is, if we had a government which had the courage to plan and reconstruct on a big scale, not minding if it trod on the interests of a minority or if it endangered its own majority.

Undoubtedly the consciences of a considerable number of the many serious young people to-day would be eased with regard to the value of what they are murdering for if our proudly-named 'National' governments were able to say that every man, woman and child in this country was receiving a fair deal from life.

And I personally would at once feel the urge to defend a social organization which was fearlessly and unequivocally devoted to the immediate task of removing from life the pitiful human wrecks which surround us at the present

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time, taking the risk that the type of society which would emerge from Armageddon would be radically different from that for which I fought—a possibility which Mr. Bertrand Russell asserts is a certainty.

At present I believe that the majority of young men—and young women—in this country will kill, if their government assures them that this country must bomb defenceless men, women and children of another country. When I am honest with myself I must admit that I am not convinced of the sovereign efficacy of settling a dispute by endeavouring to the best of one’s ability to kill the other man. I also have an inconvenient feeling that to deprive another creature of life can never be justified—even though the ‘balance of power’ should be upset or markets lost, or even because a less scrupulous nation should take advantage of one’s conscience to govern one by harsh and uncomfortable methods.

After all, those who admit that the act of killing is equally repugnant to them but insist that it is justified if an inferior civilization attempts to retard the forward drive, are wilfully neglecting the proved fact of human progress that superior ideas ultimately must prevail. From time to time, barbarism has triumphed, but ultimately—if the defeated or submissive people were indeed more advanced, the barbarians have acquired their code and oil and water have mixed. Human progress can only be delayed—it cannot be checked. And if those professing Christians who justify slaughter on these grounds really do believe in the existence of the human soul, and that the things of the spirit are the most important, I fail to follow their logic when a man can obviously cherish his own soul and develop his own spirit although he may be governed by aliens with the utmost tyranny and humiliation to himself.

When one attempts the well-nigh impossible task of

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considering theoretically the ethic of taking life in all circumstances, I feel one must admit that if there is any truth in his creed and any reality in Christ's life, the essence of Christianity consists in his doctrine of turning the other cheek and his definite non-acceptance of the principle that it is more blessed to hang on to the extra one may have grabbed than to relinquish it to the less fortunate.

It seems as if there will always be an infinite variety of quibbles over certain phrases which Christ used and which—although in direct contradiction to the whole symbolism of his life as sacrifice in the belief of ultimate progress through the essential value of his philosophy—are twisted to convey materialistic advice where one would have thought that any reasonable intelligence would have granted that they continued the sense of his preceding words—as a flow of connected speech usually does unless the speaker specially underlines his *volte face*.

However, I cannot see how one will ever get round the difficulty that Christ clearly did not envisage that his words would not be interpreted according to their context and in keeping with the life he chose to lead and the death to which he submitted rather than cause bloodshed. Reluctant though I am to admit it, I am painfully afraid that it seems as if for a very long time ahead—if ever—Christ is not going to get us anywhere with regard to a solution of the 'Should I Fight?' problem.

Therefore as far as young—and old—are concerned, the 'Would I Fight?' problem will always boil down to how quick the politician is in stampeding that type which always will be stampeded on the slightest provocation, and how cunning he is in providing a convincing enough cat-call for those more analytical intelligences to feel that after all they really are killing for some decent cause which is not too selfish. There will always be a very definite



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proportion who will feel the terrible responsibility and guilt which they are assuming when they acquiesce and participate in slaughter. I am prepared to admit that the responsibility of those few who precipitate a war must be heavily felt, yet I can never forget Mr. A. A. Milne’s query as to the number of unavoidable wars which might not have seemed so unavoidable had the responsible Prime Minister felt that his duty on signing the death warrant of so many of his fellow creatures was at once to blow his own brains out.

Nor can I forget the terrible outburst of the young soldier in O’Neill’s *Mourning becomes Electra* who, recalling the unprepared enemy soldiers he had coldbloodedly to murder, said that as their eyes dimmed it seemed as if he was murdering the same man twice and that ultimately he would find that the man was himself.

The likelihood of securing a united nation in an emergency would seem to me to be more obviously possible if everyone in this country was acutely conscious of the lead in the essential things, material and spiritual, which we had over our neighbours, since our conscience would then more readily be lulled into justifying the slaughter of those who attempted to crush us.

To-day, the function of the politician who feels that he must sentence millions to death in agony must be to discover the most specious new call to arms. I am not prepared to try to estimate the number of those who will refuse to participate in another war, but I am certain that—despite the plausible argument that people always talk big beforehand and lack the courage of minority convictions when the Gadarene moment arrives—there will be substantially more than in 1914, and more than many politicians can enjoy reflecting on in bed o’ nights.

For myself I should like nothing better than to set down a grand ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to the ‘Would I Fight?’ problem, and

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forthwith despatch this essay to the printer. But I am afraid that when I attempt that most difficult task of being honest with myself in trying to be honest, I find that I cannot truthfully say 'I will do this or that—whatever the circumstances.' I know in my heart and in my brain that it is finer to suffer than to rise up in one's pride and refuse to have one's dignity affronted, or one's pocket picked by unscrupulous neighbours. I know that it can never be noble to kill, and that if one was goaded into butchering one would never feel any sense of pride or satisfaction that one had honoured one's country, despite flag and handkerchief waving, Armistice Days, medals—if one was 'lucky'—and all the other trappings with which war is gilded in order to cloak its slimy, dirty soul. I know all these things, and knowing them, the correct keys on my typewriter beckon to me to set down the logical conclusion of this—common—knowledge.

But although I hope that I will die for my country rather than kill for it, I cannot hit the right keys. Judas Iscariot probably possessed as much nobility of character as most of us to day, but despite the many moments during which he must have seen the betrayal that he was drifting towards, when the moment came, the power of the world was too strong for him. I believe that there are many of my age who have the same conflict, the same feeling that one course is fundamentally right and the other—however practical by worldly values—fundamentally evil.

It is a conflict which must have been fought out by countless others since the world began. It is still as real to-day, if not more so, for many obvious reasons. But I cannot see that it is anything but self-deception to attempt to delude the world into a belief that one has everything neatly cut and dried within one's own brain—or that one believes that the majority of people like oneself have.

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War is wrong—so what? This, I believe, is the position of the majority of young people to-day. And if this age cannot find the answer to this question, then may the materialism—upon which this age appears to be basing itself, be the rock upon which it founders.

Maybe a wiser century will learn how to combine the material advances we have made in ‘civilization’ with the essential things of the spirit without which the twentieth century must perish.















